- We endorse Clinton/Gore! Then we show how they sell out
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- Reviews by Natalie Angier, Michael Massing, and Stanley Fish

The Washington Monthly

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What every woman can learn from the heroine of Tailhook

by Katherine Boo

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AMERICAN POLITICAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION ISSUE

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The sheep that came home for winter.

Winds here can scream up to 70 miles per hour. Temperatures plummet to 20 below. This is Stillwater Valley, Montana. The winter home of a small, flourishing herd of Bighorn Sheep. A herd that for years has been struggling to survive. But people who work nearby are providing medication and food to nurture, protect and save these majestic animals. Hopefully helping each generation become healthier. Each generation larger.

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People Do.

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The Washington Monthly

Volume Twenty-Four, Number Nine September 1992

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LETTERS

The empire strikes back

This is to set the record straight on numerous inaccurate statements made in an article by Eric Konigsberg ["Empires of the Sons (and the Friends, and the Mistresses)," June].

First, Konigsberg states that the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) "has seen its political appointments jump from six to thirty in the past four years. . . ." This statement is inaccurate. In 1988, there were 20 political appointees (not 6) in the OJP; now there are 14 (not 30).

Second, the article incorrectly indicates that I have "consolidated all [OJP] bureau contract-making" to my office. The fact is that OJP bureau heads are statutorily vested by Congress with final authority over the making of all grants, cooperative agreements, and contracts awarded by their bureaus. The role of the assistant attorney general is to establish policies and priorities, and manage and coordinate the activities of the OJP bureaus.

Third, the article claims that throughout my tenure OJP's "grant guidelines and application forms for discretionary funding have been published so late that two weeks before the deadline, they weren't available." The publication of grant guidelines and application forms had been problematic, and the subject of Congressional hearings, before I came to this agency as assistant attorney general. However, under my watch, all grant guidelines and application forms have been published in a very timely manner, allowing ample opportunity for interested parties to respond—generally 90 days for competitive programs, and 30 to 60 days for noncompetitive programs.

Fourth, Konigsberg states that OJP union members have "filed 14 unfair labor practice charges with the Federal Labor Relations Authority (FLRA) since Gurule took over in 1988." This is yet another inaccurate statement. Contrary to Konigsberg's assertion, I became assistant attorney general in August 1990, not 1988. The fact is that during the period of 1990 through 1991, six unfair labor practice charges were filed. Four were withdrawn, and no FLRA complaints were issued. While the FLRA issued two complaints, in one case the FLRA found that OJP had *not* committed the alleged unfair labor practice of withholding information from the union, and found instead that the only minor violation was not quickly informing the union that the information it requested did not exist. The second case is pending a decision. In 1992, four FLRA labor practice charges were filed, and all four have been withdrawn. FLRA did not issue complaints.

Finally, as the grant-making arm of the Department of Justice, OJP's responsibilities are far more encompassing than "monitoring statistics and grants." OJP's role is to help state and local units of government more effectively fight violent crime, drug use, and drug trafficking and to improve the operation of the criminal justice system. OJP has played a major role in implementing the administration's comprehensive Weed and Seed initiative and in addressing the problem of gangs nationwide. Efforts like these and others are having a tremendous impact throughout the country on the problems of crime and drugs, and are making our streets safer for law abiding citizens.

I am appalled that Konigsberg lacked the professionalism to verify his statements with me or OJP's office of congressional and public affairs prior to publishing this article.

JIMMY GURULE
Washington, D.C.
Mr. Gurule is assistant attorney general, Office of Justice Programs.

The author replies:

In erroneously stating that Gurule's appointment began in 1988, and not 1990, I overstated the number of FLRA charges against his office—but not, in fact, the rate at which they have been accumulated. Six of the fourteen have come during Gurule's 21 months as assistant attorney general, indicating his record on this count to be no better than that of his immediate predecessor, under whose tenure the charges began to pile up.

Concerning the issue of grant application procedures, I interviewed numerous congressional staffers who work with Gurule's office and who complained that the publication of application forms during his rule continues to be delayed.

Regarding Gurule's point about control over contract-making, solid evidence to the contrary comes directly from the Justice Department itself. In an executive order dated February 1991, then-Attorney General Richard Thornburgh did in fact give Gurule authorization "to make final decisions concerning whether such grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements are consistent with the established policies and priorities."

That Gurule was given this final say in grant decision-making is shameful. And we're not the only ones who think so. In August of 1991, a GAO report on the executive order concluded that "such authority cannot reasonably be implied" from OJP's statutory framework, and recommended a reversal of the order.

As for the number of appointees, these statistics were provided by a public affairs official at the Department of Justice itself.

Money returned

Thanks to Christopher Georges ["Old Money," June 1992] for the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) article. We who belong to the local chapters have been in a state of perplexity as to where the dollars from national membership have gone. Maybe we have been too trusting.

WALTER A. WILSON
Portland, Oregon

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After reading your article, I wonder whether you take your responsibility to your readers seriously. The story is filled with inaccuracies and unsubstantiated allegations. It calls into question the ethical standards of your publication.

To correct just a few of the inaccuracies:

➤AARP is not subsidized by government grants.

➤We strongly supported the standardization of Medicare Supplemental Insurance.

➤We have always supported lower prescription drug prices.

➤We have stated publicly numerous times that we would forgo revenue from our Group Health Insurance Program for comprehensive national health care reform.

➤Our volunteer board of directors sets all AARP policies.

➤Your intention to do a hatchet job on our association is clearly reflected by your characterization of the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), a jobs program for low-income older Americans that is partially funded by the U.S. Department of Labor. AARP, one of 10 national organizations in 50 states that operate the SCSEP, contributes to the cost of the program; if SCSEP were eliminated we would save money. As we explained to your reporter, AARP operated 108 SCSEP sites around the country, but not in the Washington, D.C. area. When your "undercover" reporter called, it was entirely appropriate to refer him to the local sponsor. We explained this to your reporter but he ignored it.

Again, these are only a few of the inaccuracies. *The Washington Monthly* should take its responsibility to provide accurate information to its readers as seriously as we take our responsibility to serve our members.

HORACE B. DEETS
Washington, D.C.
Mr. Deets is the executive director of AARP.

The author replies:

In response to the "inaccuracies" listed by Deets:

➤That AARP receives approximately $75 million from the federal government to run a pair of job placement programs was verified by both AARP officials and the Department of Labor, which provides the funds.

➤We reported, just as AARP officials informed us, that AARP supported both standardization of Medicare Supplemental Insurance and lower prescription drug prices. We also reported, however, what congressional staffers who were closely involved in writing and enacting each piece of legislation told us: that AARP did not fully back the proposals.

➤On national health insurance reform, we reported that "elderly advocates question AARP's motives in failing to support the proposed Canadian-style health insurance reform." We stand by that statement.

➤Numerous sources, including AARP insiders and one recently fired AARP director, insist that the association's lawyers, as well as paid staff members, play a larger role in setting AARP policy than does the volunteer board of directors.

➤Regarding Deets' defense of the SCSEP jobs program: The D.C. office we called is (as we stated) AARP's national headquarters. While AARP may not operate a local SCSEP branch in this area, we believe it's reasonable to expect that an official in the senior employment office at AARP's national headquarters would be able to do more than refer a caller seeking information to "the phone book under the senior citizens section" and to other elderly advocacy groups.

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Gold digger

Brigid Schulte's article ["Annie, Get Your Guccis," July/August] on mining began with an incorrect premise. Newmont Mining Corporation's 1990 production of gold, which your magazine cited, was from private land in Nevada primarily purchased for $35 million from Chuck Thornton and Roy Ash in 1982. Newmont did not buy the land from the federal government for "between $2.50 and $5 an

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acre," as your magazine stated. An accurate and extensive report on the 1982 transaction ran in *Fortune* magazine.

We also pay royalties to the Thornton and Ash interests because they sold us the rights to a very large mine already discovered on their private property, which was several hundred yards from an existing Newmont mine and also very close to costly infrastructure already established by Newmont. In other words, we did not have to spend $50 million annually in exploration funds for many years to find such a mine, and did not have to start from scratch to employ all the people and facilities to develop one.

Had Schulte sought to contact Newmont, your magazine might have avoided a patently erroneous characterization of our property, which unfortunately set the trajectory for the entire article.

JAMES F. HILL
Denver, Colorado
Mr. Hill is vice president in charge of corporate relations for the Newmont Mining Corporation.

The author replies:

James Hill is correct in saying that the majority of Newmont Mining Corporation's 1990 gold production—1.68 million ounces—was extracted from the Gold Quarry lands in the Carlin Mine Complex in Nevada. Newmont acquired the Quarry's 522 acres from Roy Ash and Chuck Thornton.

But contrary to Hill's assertion, a portion of that productive mine sits on lands controlled by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM)—a fact I verified with both the U.S. Bureau of Mines and BLM officials in Nevada.

More to the point, however, I opened my article with a discussion of Newmont Mining Corporation's operations and land ownership in aggregate and made no specific reference to the Gold Quarry site. Newmont has in fact acquired land from the federal government for between $2.50 and $5 an acre, as I reported. According to records in Nevada's Eureka County assessor's office, Newmont has to date patented a total of 59 mining claims. In addition to those patents on federal lands that Newmont has already taken into private ownership, it has patent applications pending to take nine more claims, totalling 1,546 acres, private. Newmont has already paid the $5-per-acre filing fee for seven of those applications, according to BLM's field office in Reno, totalling $7,480 for nearly 1,500 acres of public land.

It is ironic that Hill makes mention in his letter of the royalties Newmont pays Ash and Thornton's heirs. The question of paying royalties has been a rallying cry for the mining industry ever since the reform movement got off the ground. In several interviews and in public testimony, mining industry representatives have said companies would be forced out of business if they were forced to pay the federal government the 5 to 8 percent royalties called for in the House and Senate versions of mining reform bills. Yet Newmont pays Ash and Thornton 18 percent royalties and will continue to do so for the life of their 99-year lease agreement, according to the 1982 *Fortune* article Hill mentions.

A final point: I am sure Hill is aware that I did make several attempts to reach him by phone and left a number of messages stating the deadline for my story. To his credit, he did call back. But after the deadline had passed.

Business reply mail

While your article "Empires of the Sons" regurgitated a bit of the U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) ancient history and centered on tabloid gossip about political appointees, it overlooked what should be the single most important measure of government—effectiveness. Here are some of SBA's accomplishments in just the past year:

➤The agency launched a microloan program that makes business loans available, ranging from less than $100 to $25,000, to promote entry-level entrepreneurship.

➤Price Waterhouse reviewed our loan guarantee program and found our clients substantially more productive in job creation, sales, and growth than equivalent firms not benefitting from SBA assistance. Demand for our loan guarantee programs is up 30 percent nationwide.

➤In New England, our guarantee program helps salvage companies that through no fault of their own would otherwise have closed due to bank failures.

➤Our program for the socially and economically disadvantaged now offers business development assistance to more than 4,000 firms and as of October 1991 had awarded about $4 billion in federal contracting opportunities.

DANIEL ERAMIAN
Washington, D.C.
Mr. Eramian is assistant administrator for public communications at SBA.

Unfair Harvard

Regarding Richard Kahlenberg's *Broken Contract* reviewed in your June issue ["Loot Court," Jonathan Rowe]: Kahlenberg paints Harvard Law School as the enemy of public interest idealism and a bastion of corporate-minded sell-outs. And some of his points about eroding idealism as a result of legal education are well taken. But Kahlenberg tells only half the story.

In the fall of 1990, one year after Kahlenberg's graduation, Harvard Law School's Office of the Public Interest Adviser (OPIA) was created to actively assist students in exploring public interest careers and securing public interest jobs. OPIA provides one-on-one counseling, houses one of the most extensive collections of resources on public interest legal opportunities in the country, sponsors panels, and much more.

More than 10 percent of the 1992 Harvard Law class accepted public interest jobs upon graduation, and 225 of our students took public interest jobs in the summer of 1992. Harvard also provides generous financial support through a number of new fellowship programs and through the Low Income Protection Plan, a generous loan-forgiveness program that allows graduates to choose career options that might otherwise have been foreclosed to them due to unmanageable educational loans.

Kahlenberg's disillusionment with law school socialization may be valid. But, as Rowe points out, Kahlenberg's complaints may have much less to do with Harvard Law than with the current nature of the elite legal education itself.

STACY M. DEBROFF
Cambridge, Massachusetts
Ms. DeBroff is director of public interest advising, Harvard Law School.

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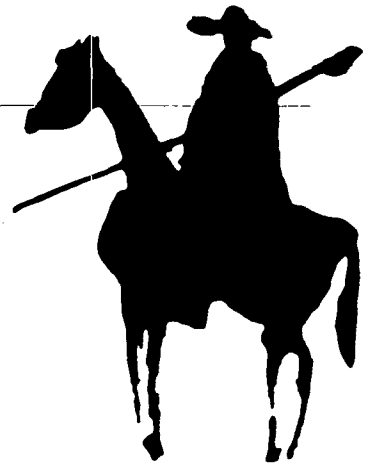

We plan to vote for Bill Clinton and Al Gore and hope you will too. In values and ability, they are clearly better than Bush and Quayle.

Why then do we criticize them as we do in this issue? The explanation lies in the mission of this magazine: to discover why our system of government breaks down and what can be done to make it work so that we can attain the justice for all that this country is supposed to stand for. Our main enemies are those conservatives to whom "all" most definitely does not include the have-nots and to whom effective government is a threat because it might deprive them of their leg up on the rest of us. But we also criticize liberals whose faith in government blinds them to its defects. Thus, we feel it is important to take on groups like the teachers' and government employees' unions that oppose reform that might threaten their tenure even though it would help society as a whole. We want to warn the Democratic candidates that pandering to such selfishness will diminish their ability to make crucial reforms in education and in the bureaucracy. . . .

For those who suspect that Dan Quayle's Council on Competitiveness is up to no good but lack hard evidence, I offer this report from the Charleston, West Virginia, *Gazette* to show what just one action taken by the council could mean to one community. The EPA's William Reilly had proposed that manufacturers be allowed to increase toxic emissions by 10,000 pounds for production reasons, but only after the public was given a chance to comment. Quayle's council not only scuttled the public review but increased the allowable amount to 490,000 pounds. This means that the seven chemical plants in the Charleston area can now increase toxic emissions to a total of 3.4 million pounds a year. . . .

If you're traveling to any place other than a large city, you're likely to find yourself boarding a commuter airline. That you should do so with the gravest misgiving is suggested by this news from CBS correspondent Roberta Baskin: Commuter airlines can legally require their pilots to work six 15-hour days in a row. "More than half the time, crews are routinely scheduled for what is called 'reduced rest,' " the meaning of which Baskin illustrates with an Atlantic Southeast Airlines crew. After completing three flights in one day, the crew lands at Dothan, Alabama, at 9:45, goes to bed at 11 p.m., and leaves a wake-up call for 4:30 a.m. You will not be surprised to learn that commuter airlines suffered a record number of fatalities last year. . . .

Those of us who were torn between admiring Margaret Thatcher as a champion of the entrepreneur and dismissing her as just another sell-out to big business have had the issue resolved in favor of the latter by her acceptance of $1 million from Phillip Morris. Her assignment, according to *The Sunday Times*, is "to help resist attempts to ban tobacco advertising and to fight tobacco taxes."

Phillip Morris seems to have its tentacles everywhere. Craig Fuller, the former Bush staffer who is in charge of this year's Republican National Convention, now heads the company's Washington office. Even a firm called Healthy Buildings, which is supposed to advise owners on how to make the air in their buildings cleaner, has, according to NBC News, "strong ties to Phillip Morris." The result: Healthy Buildings has never recommended a smoking ban. . . .

It's tempting to believe the timber industry when it promises that all those clear cuts despoiling the Pacific Northwest will soon grow back into beautiful forests. But a study recently reported in the scientific journal *Conservation Biology* compared old-growth forests—those that had never been cut—to nine forests that had been clear cut from 45 to 87 years ago. None of the nine had returned to its original condition. The study concludes that it will probably take the

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forests a very long time—if ever—to return to old-growth condition. The most depressing fact was that the site cut 87 years ago was no closer to its original condition than the one cut 45 years ago. . . .

One of the many signs that Washington reporters have joined the ranks of the affluent is their clothing. Male journalists (especially the TV pundits) who used to be noted for wearing low-style, rumpled, ill-fitting polyester and wool blends that had certainly been bought off the rack, and probably on sale, are increasingly seen in tailored suits of the purest and finest wool that, if they do not come from Saville Row, certainly cost somewhere between $500 and $1,000. . . .

Some readers didn't believe me when I reported a few months back that a lot of federal executives were eating fancy meals in taxpayer-subsidized dining rooms. Well, *The Washington Post*'s Dana Priest listed the offerings on the menu at the Treasury Department on a recent Friday as including seafood bisque, shrimp and crab meat pasta salad, fruit salad, and strawberry sundaes. "On another Friday," Priest added, "it offered broiled lobster tail, roasted 'red bliss' potatoes, asparagus, and poached pear with chocolate and raspberry sauce." All this costs the individual Treasury executive $4.75. The taxpayers' subsidy is $126,048 this year. . . .

A story in *The Washington Post*'s Style section the day after Clark Clifford's indictment expressed the sympathy and support local insiders were according their old friend. As another old Washington hand, I knew almost all the people quoted. Paul Ignatius, Harry McPherson, Lloyd Cutler, Joseph Rauh, and Paul Warnke are all men I have known and respected for years. Mrs. Townsend Hoopes, who was also quoted, is the mother of a former intern here at the *Monthly*. I share this sympathy—who wouldn't feel sorry for an elderly man who has to endure so much humiliation after enjoying so much respect—but I deeply disagree with their support of Clifford. I see the case as does Robert Morganthau, the Manhattan district attorney, as an obvious bribery in which BCCI paid off Clifford and Altman to conceal its ownership of First American.

Why do my friends see it so differently? It is, I think, because they are part of a Washington culture in which something close to bribery is so common that one learns not to inquire when there are circumstances that would ordinarily raise suspicion about the activities of one's friends. Or perhaps it is because there is a deep collective aversion to even entertaining such suspicions.

I remember several years ago trying to talk to Warnke about a previous suspicious episode in Clifford's life—the time around 1969–70 when he was fronting as a director of the National Bank of Washington for murderer Tony Boyle and his henchmen, who were using the bank to bilk the United Mine Workers' pension fund [See "Moral Ostrichism: Blindness on a Bank Board," John Rothchild, November 1970].

Although the facts were clear, Warnke didn't want to hear them. He kept saying his own experience with Clifford raised no questions about Clifford's character but instead inspired both

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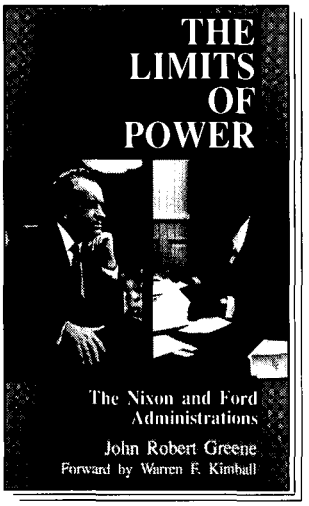

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affection and admiration. That's fine, I thought, but what about the widows who got cheated by Tony Boyle? What about the ethics of lending your name to such a person and to the corrupt organization that the UMW was at that time?

If you work for a prominent Washington law firm, as have people like Warnke, Cutler, McPherson, and Rauh, or for a large trade association (as have Ignatius and Mrs. Hoopes' husband, Tim), you are inevitably representing a mixture of good and bad. If you want to keep earning those big fees or high salaries, and if you want to keep your friends, you learn not to look too closely. If there's a certain unpleasant aroma coming from under that stone, hold your nostrils and leave it unturned; change the subject as quickly as possible, just as Warnke did with me.

The motive for doing so, I'm afraid, is big money. Each of these people felt they had to have it, except for Rauh, whose position in the Clifford matter may have been influenced by the fact that his son is one of Clifford's lawyers.

The tragedy of the money motivation is that, when you talk to these men, you know that the world of public affairs engages them far more deeply than the worlds of commerce or law. They would have been far happier spending their lives in government. To me, it is one of the great tragedies of Washington that men of this talent have been convinced that money is more important than what truly fascinates them. How much richer the nation would be if they had been willing to be poorer.

Of course, they wouldn't have had to starve. Senior civil servants are now making $112,000 a year. Or they could have become political journalists—and still afford at least a few $500 suits—using their knowledge and experience to write articles or books about public affairs. (Actually, one of these men is a gifted writer and three others are very good.) Or they could have taught government or contemporary history at a university that had enough common sense, as not enough do, to value experience more than a Ph.D. The point is that, whether as civil servants, journalists, or professors—or in careers that, and I think this would have been the best use of these men, would have had them moving to and from all three jobs—they would have had a good chance of spending their lives dealing with issues that genuinely interested them. They would not have had to be doomed to the tedium of corporate law, in which the only stimulation comes from dealmaking that is seldom related to any public good. Also, they would have been free of the pressure to lobby for the selfish interests that can pay the big fees that sustain lawyers. . . .

Both my mother and father grew up on farms in families that revered the Sears catalog, so I could understand the shock that many people felt when the company's crooked auto repair practices were exposed recently in California. I suspect the real scandal is more widespread—there's evidence emerging from Sears stores in other states—and has been going on for a long time. For years I've noticed that when I needed an auto part or a repair and turned to the Sears ads, they'd say something like "25 percent off" or "one third off" without explaining off what, which is usually the tipoff that a con is being played at your expense. Such practices are not only evil but stupid. The trust of millions of descendants of farm families has been Sears' greatest asset. . . .

Bureaucratic bungling, as we keep trying to tell the world, is not merely amusing but can have tragic consequences. The latest example comes from Haiti, where thousands of people have been risking their lives trying to get to the United States on boats that look like they couldn't reach the other side of the Potomac.

More than 20,000 of these Haitians could immigrate to the U.S. *legally*. The Immigration and Naturalization Service has approved their visa papers and sent them to Port-au-Prince, where they are gathering dust at the U.S. embassy. The visa processing section was shut down for several months, reports *The Washington Post*'s Al Kamen, "because officials did not want to attract crowds during the unstable political situation."

One has to wonder why, even if it was necessary to shut down the processing section, that much of the visa work couldn't have been done behind closed doors on the basis of orderly appointments that wouldn't have attracted long lines. Also, if you know anything about life in our foreign services, you know that visa duty is avoided like the plague by the hot shots, who usually have plenty of time on their hands for long lunches, tennis, and swimming. Why not ask these worthies to get to work in the visa section until the backlog is cleared up? . . .

"Too many managers supervised too few people," according to a recent *Washington Post* article on the local Metro subway and bus system. "In some cases, two employees reported to one manager."

Veteran readers will recall that this problem is also severe in the

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District of Columbia's municipal government. As Scott Shuger noted in a December 1990 article in these pages, "In the D.C. government, the average mid-level chief leads a tribe of just over three Indians."

We wish we could report that the situation had improved during the reign of the new mayor, Sharon Pratt Kelly, but it has not. We would like to give you her explanations, but as we go to press, she's out of town, as she has been during almost one third of her tenure. This time she's in Barcelona.

The tragedy is that, except for the fact that she does not seem to be given to inhaling exotic substances in hotel rooms with persons of the opposite sex other than her spouse, this woman, in whom so many of us placed high hopes, has turned out to be little better than her predecessor, Marion Barry.

Evidence of her government's incompetence continues to mount. For example, a congressional subcommittee has criticized the District's Department of Public and Assisted Housing for, according to *The Washington Times*, "bloated employment rolls, poor oversight of contracting, lack of maintenance staffs at occupied apartments, and [a] large number of units that sit vacant while waiting lists grow longer."

Meanwhile, D.C. public libraries spend $9.50 in operating expenses for every book circulated. That ratio is, according to the *Post*'s Joel Garreau, "higher than any state and virtually all U.S. cities." Alexandria, Virginia, just across the Potomac, spends $1.15 per circulated book.

Seventy five percent of the District's library budget goes to personnel. Only 9.5 percent goes to books. Most cities spend at least 50 percent more than that on books.

Another tale of ineptitude comes from the D.C. Department of Finance and Revenue, which handles real estate assessments, among other things. In March, Karen Motherlee realized that the assessment on her one-bedroom condominium was $50,000 more than she had paid for it in 1990. Because the local real estate market has not exactly been soaring lately, she called the District government to complain. Getting no satisfaction, she went to the assessment office, where she found the District had her listed as the owner of a two-bedroom condo next door. She pointed this out to one functionary who refused to do anything about it. She appealed to his supervisor, who agreed to change this year's assessment but said she would have to appeal the previous years' to the board of equalization. The board agreed with Motherlee and ordered the city to change the assessment. But then, in June, she received a new bill from the city for back taxes on the one-bedroom apartment. The city apparently reasoned that since she had been paying taxes on the two-bedroom unit, she still owes for the one-bedroom.

"In two years," writes Christine Spolar of *The Washington Post*, "she had paid $2,488.22 in taxes on the wrong condo. The bill on her condo should have been $1,763.32. The city says she owes that plus more than $200 in penalties."

Then there's the case of the woman who called 911 after she was raped by an intruder in her home. Because the victim was speaking Spanish, the operator kept hanging up on her as she repeatedly called for help. The District, in case you're from out of town, has a very large hispanic population.

If you conclude from all this that it's not just Washington but cities in general that don't work anymore, consider the case of Paris. There, according to *The New York Times*, garbage is picked up seven days a week, 800 miles of streets are swept by hand every day, and if you've been there recently you know that potholes are virtually nonexistent. . . .

But the District isn't doing everything wrong. In fact, in one important area, it's pointing the way for the rest of the nation. Several years ago, it tried to deal humanely with the fears of the elderly that they would be driven from their homes by rising real estate assessments. A generous tax break was given to homeowners above age 65.

Then the city realized that some of these seniors were wealthy and could afford to pay their fair share of taxes. So this year the assessment break was changed so that it does not apply to people with incomes of more than $100,000. The rest of the country, including the federal government, should follow the District's example and take away tax breaks and other subsidies from those people who don't need them, including Treasury Department officials with their pears in chocolate and raspberry sauce. . . .

Another observation about Warnke, Cutler, et al.: Although the military services manage to retain a good many of their stars for full careers, in much of the rest of government the tradition is that the stars leave after a few years, usually for private practice or a major corporate post. One reason is the shortage of positions to which they can aspire at or near the top of the civilian agencies and departments. Why don't we establish posts comparable to the

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permanent undersecretaries in the British cabinet to which our most brilliant civil servants could advance. There they would have the necessary scope to exercise their talents. Certainly, we've got to do something to reverse a trend in which the most able people feel they have to leave government in order to maintain their self-respect. That is not good for them or for the country. . . .

The differences between men and women have fascinated me since early adolescence. So it was with keen interest that I read an article about women political reporters by Clara Bingham in the August issue of *Vogue* entitled "The Girls on the Bus." Having known quite a few of these women, I realized that, as a group, they come as close as any I know to having erased all but the physical differences between men and women. Whatever difference is left, I reasoned, must be eternal and biological, beyond the power of will or the conditioning effect of environment. As I scoured the article for clues to that fundamental difference, I began to fear my quest was in vain. But then I found it: The women's bus stops for "shop-ops."

Have you ever heard of a group of men wanting a bus stopped so they could go shopping? Most males go to a store with a specific purchase in mind, such as a shirt or a pair of shoes. Women tend to contemplate a broader range of possibilities as they enter the mall. Take the relatively narrow territory of the greeting card rack. The man will walk up to one section—such as "Birthday" or "Anniversary"—and quickly pick out a card, buy it, and leave the store. Women, on the other hand, tend to examine the entire row with due deliberation and often end up buying several cards. . . .

—*Charles Peters*

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Lord of the Lies

How Hill and Knowlton's Robert Gray pulls Washington's strings.

by Susan B. Trento

In the old days, when Robert Gray was a staffer in the Eisenhower White House and had visitors in his office, he'd have his secretary interrupt him from time to time with fake telephone calls from the President. Back then, the occasional deception helped the Nebraska native wire his White House career. Three decades later, the tricks were the same but the stakes a little higher. This time around deception helped Bob Gray set the American agenda.

"A reporter would walk in, and he would instruct his executive assistant to come in and announce there was a call from the White House," a former Gray and Company executive recalls. "Totally fabricated. They would come in and they would say, 'Mr. Gray, Mr Meese is on the phone,' and he would pick up a dead line, carry on a conversation of four or five short, rapid sentences as though he was in constant communication and hang up. And then, of course, the reporter, dazzled, would report that a White House phone call came in."

Access: The illusion of it has long been the energy source of Washington's unelected power elite—the lobbyists, PR sorcerers, and counselors who work their quiet magic on the nation's laws in back rooms the general public doesn't even know exist. And no one has nurtured that illusion better or longer than Bob Gray, one of Washington's most powerful, and most respected, influence peddlers. For 30 years, at his own firm and at Hill and Knowlton, he's set a standard—not a particularly high one—for what Washington lobbying can get away with.

Of course, Gray would probably relate his story as a Horatio Alger tale: A boy from Hastings, Nebraska, comes to Washington, works hard, and makes it to the top. When he started

This article is adapted from The Power House: Robert Keith Gray and the Selling of Access and Influence in Washington, *recently published by St. Martin's Press.*

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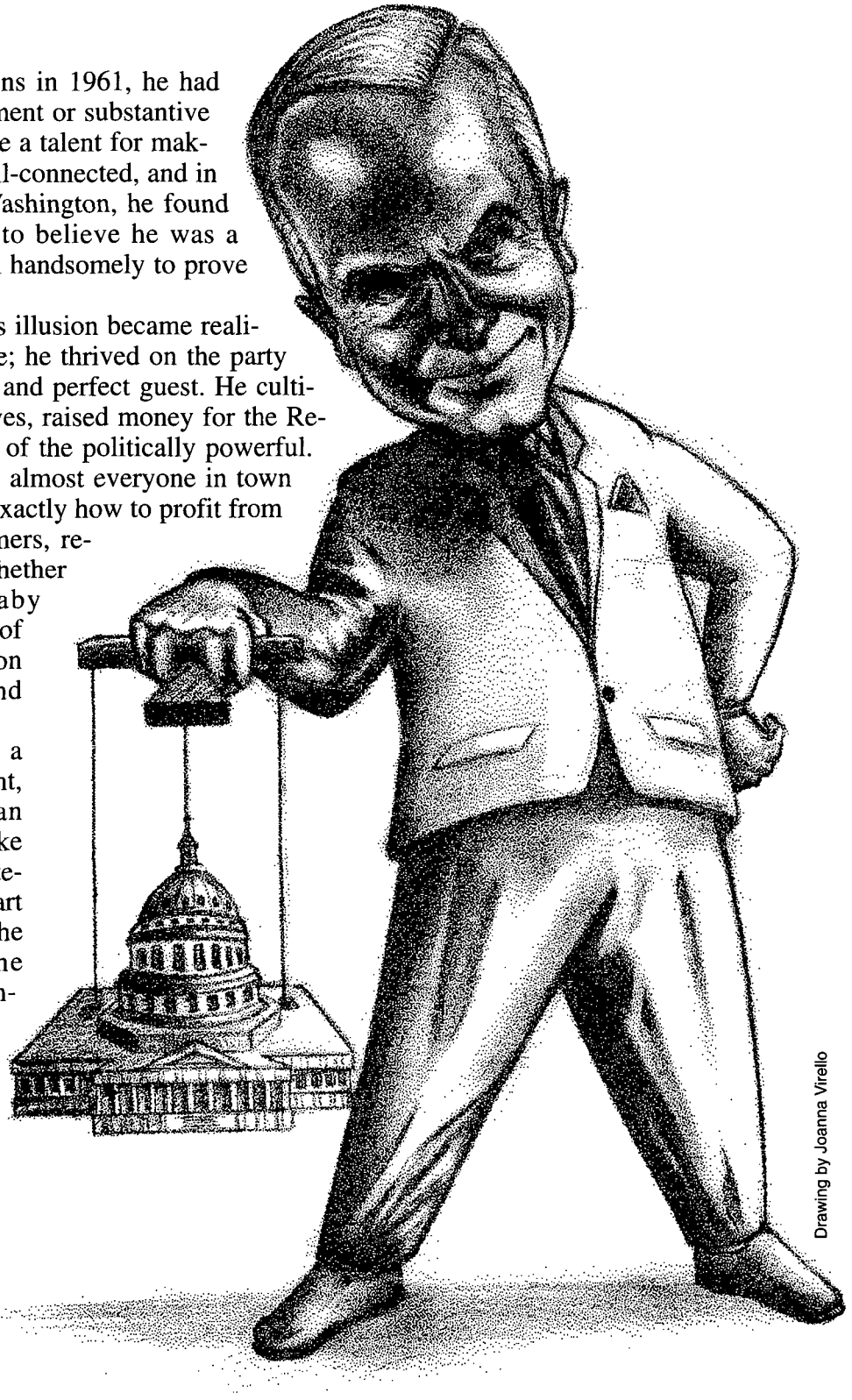
n the world of public relations in 1961, he had ıo expertise in either government or substantive ıolicymaking. But he did have a talent for mak-ng people believe he was well-connected, and in he power-crazed world of Washington, he found .n audience not only eager to believe he was a ılayer, but willing to pay him handsomely to prove t.

In relatively short order, his illusion became reali-y: Gray did favors for people; he thrived on the party ircuit; he was a perfect host and perfect guest. He culti-ated Washington society wives, raised money for the Re-ıublican party, and took care of the politically powerful. ;oon enough, Gray *did* know almost everyone in town vho mattered. And he knew exactly how to profit from hat knowledge: Take all comers, re-;ardless of who they are. Whether he client was Haiti's "Baby)oc" Duvalier or the Church of ;cientology, the only criterion vas that the client paid—and ıaid well.

Gray's professional life is a tudy of how, if it's done right, ıulling strings for profit can ome to look an awful lot like tatus. But it's not, unfortunate-y, the story of one man. In part ıecause of Gray's success, the ırand of insider politics he ine-tuned has become an en-renched and unhappy part ıf our legislative process. ıind any understanding of .ow we got here must ake into account the ca-eer of Robert Keith Gray.

In 1961, the year he ıarlayed his White House xperience into a power osition in public rela-ıons, Gray went as re-pectable as Washington



Drawing by Joanna Virello

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could get. As vice president and director of the D.C. office of Hill and Knowlton, Gray had signed on to perhaps the most conservative firm in the field.

Founder John Hill saw himself and his employees as public relations counselors, much like lawyers. Instead of simply taking instructions from his clients and putting out press releases, he genuinely tried to advise them. If a company was getting bad publicity because of bad policy, Hill would advise that the policy be revised. He would routinely turn down clients if he felt they wanted "to shade the truth," explained George Worden, a Hill and Knowlton official. "He was a very moral man."

When Gray started his own firm, he revived a trick from his old dowager-cultivating days. Only this time, he didn't escort the wives of the powerful to parties; he hired them.

Robert Gray, on the other hand, didn't pay particular attention to ethical considerations. He wanted to be a player. And his first step was to create the illusion that he had already achieved that goal. One of his initial requirements was a limousine, not just for convenient transportation, but to enhance his image. His second, third, and fourth requirements: parties—going to the right ones, sometimes three a night, and hosting some of the more memorable events in the tedium of Washington night life.

In 1966, for instance, he gave a party at his home in suburban Virginia for the Saudi Arabian ambassador and his wife. "Visitors to the hillside home . . . were greeted by what appeared to be Arabs in full Arabic costume," reported the Omaha *World-Herald*. "[It] turned out they were mannequins. . . . But the ambassador, unlike the fixtures in their tarbooshes and other Arabian regalia, was wearing a conservative blue suit."

More important than the tableaux was the guest list. And on that count, Gray was cleverer than the average social climber. He found out who mattered in Washington, and then he called their wives. Mamie Eisenhower was just one of his grande dames. "He plays his social life smooth," former Nebraska Senator Carl Curtis says. "We've been to a lot of his parties and it would be filled with women old enough to be his grandmother. Wealthy [women]—he was the favorite escort of the oldest women." But they weren't just old. They were connected.

More contacts inevitably led to more clients. Before long, Gray provided services to accounts that included the American Petroleum Institute, Procter and Gamble, and the National Association of Broadcasters. Still, Washington power is a volatile thing, and Gray made his smartest move by looking ahead. By 1967 he'd joined a 50-member committee to elect his friend, Richard Nixon, to the White House. And when Nixon won, Gray became the big gun of Republican lobbyists.

How did he use his power? Consider one client who went away happy, El Paso Natural Gas. El Paso hired Hill and Knowlton to drum up support for legislation that would allow El Paso to buy out its competitor, Pacific Northwest Pipeline Company. (El Paso's earlier attempts to do so had been blocked by a Supreme Court decision on the grounds that it would have meant higher costs for consumers.)

Hill and Knowlton went to work on Warren Magnuson of Washington state, chairman of the Senate committee considering the legislation. The PR firm drafted a dummy, fill-in-the-blank resolution and distributed it to chambers of commerce in Magnuson's home state. Later, when the senator held hearings in Seattle, Hill and Knowlton helped provide witnesses, prepared testimony, and handled the press. It supplied background materials to state and local officials, as well as sample letters to send to Congress; it contacted newspaper editors with volumes of canned materials, and many of those editors wrote supporting editorials.

By the time El Paso got its way, it had paid Hill and Knowlton hundreds of thousands of dollars, a pittance compared to the cost of the $360 million buyout that the PR firm had made possible.

Get a wife

A few more legislative coups like that one, and Bob Gray was king of the Hill. In 1980, he left Hill and Knowlton and set out on his own. In typical Gray style, he located his new offices, not on Capitol Hill, as many of the labor unions had done 20 years earlier, nor on K Street, in Washington's business and legal district, but in a beautiful old brick building on

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the canal in fashionable Georgetown. Gray paid $750,000 for the 19th-century building, a former power plant that once provided the energy for Washington's old street car system. With its towering but long-dormant smoke stack, Gray's new quarters were imposing. His gray and silver stationery read simply: "The Power House, Washington, D.C."

Gray's timing, as usual, was impeccable. This was the dawn of the Reagan era, and his was the perfect setting for carrying out the carefully crafted illusion of power, access, wealth, and influence, from the arched 25-foot windows to the blown-up photos of the Reagan inaugural. "[The] Power House was just a unique setting at the time. . . ." said Pate Felts, a Gray and Company senior vice president. "[It] was really a sexy place."

The illusion of power was also reflected in the names of those who occupied the offices. Gray had learned early on that Washington is a two-party town, and, in order to prosper, he had to create the appearance of access to both Republicans and Democrats. He lured Gary Hymel, who for years had worked as a top aide to House Speaker Tip O'Neill, and he snagged Bette Anderson, a former high-ranking Carter administration Treasury Department official. And to complete his power base, Gray revived a trick

KUWAITGATE:

On October 10, 1990, 15-year-old Nayirah was the most influential girl in the world. Tearfully relaying to Congress how she had witnessed Saddam's soldiers removing Kuwaiti babies from incubators and leaving them to die on a hospital floor, she added a crucial emotional rationale to the economic argument for U.S. involvement in the Gulf. For Robert Gray's Hill and Knowlton, which helped engineer her hearings and testimony, it was a PR masterstroke. Until, of course, it became the master's worst nightmare. Today, the validity of Nayirah's account is in doubt, and Hill and Knowlton is in the unenviable position of defending itself against charges of doctoring evidence.

But don't feel sorry for Hill and Knowlton yet. The firm has mounted a crafty self-defense, not only effectively quashing criticism, but even prompting journalists to issue retractions based on the flimsiest of evidence. Today, opponents of the war insist that the stories of mass murder of Kuwaiti babies were manufactured; yet Hill and Knowlton stands by the claims made in its original PR effort. Who's right? To find out requires dissecting Hill and Knowlton's savvy PR efforts on its own behalf.

Human wrongs

Hill and Knowlton and the Kuwaiti government began talking in August 1990—shortly after the Iraqi invasion—about ways to drum up support in the U.S. for strong military action against Iraq. The meetings led to the formation of a front group, Citizens for a Free Kuwait, which was financed almost entirely by the Kuwaiti government and which paid Hill and Knowlton $11.5 million to get its message to the right people.

A few months later, at a hearing of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, Nayirah relayed her shocking story of babies left to die. The press latched on to the story, and the reported number of incubator deaths eventually jumped from the 15 stated in Nayirah's written testimony to 312—far more than the total number of incubators in the tiny Arab nation. Several members of Congress said the testimony influenced their votes to approve military action against Iraq, and President Bush frequently mentioned the incubator story as a reason for military intervention.

But shortly after the war ended, Nayirah's story came into question. In March 1991, ABC News interviewed Kuwaiti hospital officials who denied that any babies had been dumped out of incubators by Iraqi troops. A month later, Amnesty International, which earlier had reported the figure of 312 dead, said it had "found no reliable evidence that Iraqi forces had caused the deaths" of any incubator babies. The big bombshell, however, was a story by *Harper's* magazine publisher John R. MacArthur, which appeared in January 1992 on *The New York Times* op-ed page, revealing that Nayirah was the daughter of the Kuwaiti ambassador to the United States. MacArthur also revealed that Reps. Tom Lantos and John Edward Porter, who sponsored the congressional hearings, had started a group called the Congressional Human Rights Foundation that had received $50,000 from Citizens for a Free Kuwait, as well as free office space in Hill and Knowlton's Washington headquarters.

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from his old dowager-cultivating days. Only this time, he didn't escort the wives-of to parties; he hired them.

There was Noreen Fuller, the first wife of Vice President Bush's former Chief of Staff Craig Fuller. There was Nancy Thurmond, wife of Senator Strom Thurmond, then chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. There was Washington socialite Joan Braden. Keeping the wives of the powerful happy was smart business. Not that they knew anything about lobbying, but they contributed to the illusion of access. "Need a favor from Henry Kissinger? Call Joan Braden," *The New York Times* wrote. "A prominent Washington hostess with many highly placed friends, she regularly counts Mr. Kissinger among her dinner guests."

The stars brought in clients from the Kennedy Center to Montgomery Ward. Yet perhaps the most crucial wife in Gray's roster didn't work for him at all—but Ursula Meese's husband would be one of his biggest catches.

"[Gray] was friends with the Reagans and all that, but he did not have a lot of contact with them," said Larry Speakes, Reagan's deputy press secretary in the early eighties. Ed Meese was a natural point of entry for the master of illusion.

After the Nayirah fiasco, Hill and Knowlton's neediest client has been itself.

Hill and Knowlton, now under fire, launched an immediate counterattack, releasing a fiercely worded cable by the U.S. ambassador to Kuwait, Edward W. Gnehm, which insisted that 250 babies had been killed by Iraqi troops. The cable offered no evidence of such massive carnage. Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti government set out to get some. It hired an internationally respected investigator, Kroll Associates, to review the allegations of infant deaths and report the truth to the world. Middle East Watch, a branch of the left-leaning Human Rights Watch, was also investigating.

Hill and Knowlton, however, was less willing to wait for the results of the Kroll study. Its image-repair effort went full steam ahead. In April, the firm went to court in Frankfurt to force a German television station to publicly retract an alleged implication that Hill and Knowlton knowingly spread a false story. The court sided against Hill and Knowlton, but the case served the firm well, putting news organizations on notice that Hill and Knowlton was not ready to lick its wounds in silence.

Hill and Knowlton's next move, one month later, targeted National Public Radio (NPR) commentator Daniel Schorr, who had casually referred to the incubator story as a "hoax" in an article he wrote for *The Washington Post*'s editorial page. Hill and Knowlton vice chairman (and former president of NPR) Frank Mankiewicz sent Schorr the Gnehm cable and some news clippings, including a Reuters dispatch from January 1992, appearing to confirm Nayirah's charges. Schorr quickly caved, writing in a June letter in the *Post* that he had "made a mistake."

Schorr now says he has doubts about whether he should have issued such an apology, and "whether it was indeed a hoax." But Hill and Knowlton has kept the pressure on. After *The Washington Monthly* awarded MacArthur a Monthly Journalism Award in April for his *Times* op-ed, Mankiewicz fired off a letter to the magazine, published in the June issue, declaring that "the story [Nayirah] told about the incubator turns out to be true." But again he offered little evidence other than the cable from Gnehm.

Hearing aides

This summer, the voluminous Kroll Associates study was released to virtually no attention. The only mention in the national press was by *The Washington Post*. For that, Hill and Knowlton is probably grateful. Based on more than 250 interviews over a nine-week period, the Kroll report concluded that at least seven babies died because of the looting of incubators. However, Kroll also reported that there was no written record and no consensus among nurses on how many such deaths may have occurred. It said Nayirah had told Kroll of seeing only one baby outside its incubator in an incident lasting "no more than a moment." Also, she told Kroll that, contrary to her testimony, which she said had been prepared with the help of Hill and Knowlton, she had not been a volunteer at the hospital, but had only stopped by for a few minutes.

Why had Nayirah put the number of of dead babies at 15? The answer is that she didn't. Hill and

(Continued on next page.)

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Meese was the only one of Reagan's three top aides who was impressed by Gray. James Baker came from a rich, socially prominent family and had headed Gerald Ford's 1976 presidential campaign. He did not need any Washington introductions, either politically or socially. Michael Deaver, a skilled PR man himself, could see right through Gray's carefully crafted illusion of power and access. But Meese was new to Washington, had come with little money, and was vulnerable to offers of introductions to the "right" people, and to overtures of kindness and friendship during his times of trouble. He was just the type of person with whom Gray could ingratiate himself, and he had the kind of influence with Reagan that would make Gray's time and effort worthwhile.

The Meeses' financial difficulties were no secret. Meese's wife Ursula, *The Washington Post* wrote, "has worn borrowed evening clothes to fancy dinners because the family finances are tight." Gray knew an opportunity when he saw it; he had one of his clients create a job for Ursula. He convinced millionaire William Moss to create the William Moss Institute, a philanthropic foundation to poll Americans about their concerns for the future. It was associated with American University, another Gray client. Gray then recommended Ursula Meese for director of the institute at $40,000 a year, thereby increasing the Meese family income by about 66 percent. "Ursula Meese was hired only because she was married to the attorney general," a senior Gray and Company executive said. "I was there when she

Kuwaitgate

(Continued from previous page.)

Knowlton did. While the text of her testimony, released to the media by the public relations firm before the hearing, used that number, a specific figure was never mentioned in her oral testimony.

Kroll also tracked down other widely publicized sources of incubator claims and found nothing to substantiate them. For instance, Dr. Ibrahim Bahbahani, who was identified as a Kuwaiti surgeon during U.N. Security Council hearings (hearings that Hill and Knowlton helped orchestrate), had said he knew of 120 incubator murders. But he told Kroll he had no direct knowledge of such incidents. In addition, the Middle East Watch report revealed that Bahbahani lied about his true identity: He is a dentist.

Another faulty source was Abdullah Al-Hammadi, an internist who had been quoted by Hill and Knowlton as saying he had handled 38 bodies of babies killed by the Iraqis. He told Kroll he had made no such statement.

The Kroll report to a large degree corroborated the conclusions of Middle East Watch, which stated that after interviewing dozens of Kuwaiti hospital personnel, it "found no basis to the allegation" that Iraqis took babies en masse from incubators and left them to die.

Why would the original "witnesses" have made such charges only to deny them later? The Middle East Watch report offers a speculation: "We do not know whether these doctors, all employees of the Kuwaiti government, might have become part of that government's wartime public relations effort or whether they were influenced by the rumormongering that often accompanies cataclysmic events."

These days, Kuwaiti officials decline to discuss the matter with the press. But Hill and Knowlton remains on the offensive: The Kroll report, says company spokesman Tom Ross, is a "vindication of Hill and Knowlton. It conclusively demonstrates that there were incubator atrocities and that Nayirah was a witness to them. Case closed."

There is no doubt that the Iraqis committed numerous and horrible atrocities after invading Kuwait, and some premature infants certainly were among the victims of chaotic wartime conditions, including the disruption of electricity and a shortage of nurses. But it now appears as though one of the key factors in prodding the U.S. to take military action was dubious at best, even according to Kuwait's own chosen investigator.

Yet Hill and Knowlton seems to have survived its embarrassment just fine. Most reporters, having apparently been burned by Hill and Knowlton's handiwork in spreading the original Nayirah story without checking it out, seem to prefer to let the story fade away, passively falling, once again, for the company's public relations guile. But that should come as little surprise: After all, Hill and Knowlton's ability to con the powerbrokers is what has kept it on top of the Hill for decades.

—Ted Rowse

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was hired and I remember the terms of the agreement and it was clear."

A few phone calls, and Gray had ensured that his White House calls would get returned. Buying influence was easy, and sometimes it was cheap. For example, Gray had known Caspar Weinberger for years, and it just happened that Weinberger's son needed a job. Gray paid Caspar Jr. $2,000 a month, and when Gray's clients needed something from the Pentagon, Gray and Company went right to the top.

Of course, keeping influence was sometimes trickier than getting it. Joan Braden's contacts, for instance, gave Gray and Company one of its most prestigious accounts—the government of Canada. But Canada also illustrated a problem with Gray's star system, as the big names often had no experience in PR.

Braden won the account through her friendship with Canada's then-Ambassador Allan Gotlieb. Once the account was secured, it was turned over to young, low-paid account executives, who saw it as a fat cow ready to be milked dry. "Everybody who could fancy the slightest reason for piling on, piled on," Joan Braden said in her memoir, *Just Enough Rope*. "Why were six people from the press department attending a conference in Ottawa?"

The Canada account ended with great public embarrassment. Gray and Company sent *The New York Times* a press release that misspelled the ambassador's name, the name of the reporter, and the name of the ambassador's guest at the luncheon the press release was promoting. The *Times* ran a story saying that Canada's publicists could not even spell the names correctly. Canada canceled the contract, and Joan Braden quit.

Presstidigitation

Still, Gray's business could survive, in part because, as the eighties progressed, the illusion-machine was on full power.

When Gray courted the media, he left nothing to chance, hiring personal aides or special assistants whose primary responsibilities were to get him favorable publicity. A mention in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* style sections could work wonders. High social visibility was encouraged, especially among top-tier people like Frank Mankiewicz, Alejandro Orfila, and Braden. The regular appearance of well-known Gray and Company stars at social and political functions and the drum beat in the press contributed to the firm's image as the most talented and well-connected in town.

When *The New York Times* wrote about Gray in 1982, he carefully orchestrated the interview as he had done so many times before. Clip files on Gray are filled with stories like this:

> His hair is silver-gray, his suits are impeccably tailored, and he is always in a hurry. . . . "Get me Jim Baker," Mr. Gray calls to his secretary . . . Mr. Gray can get just about anyone in town on the telephone, maybe even the President now and then. . . . Just now, he is talking to Mr. Baker. "James!" he booms. "How are you doing? . . . We want to help you anytime we can. . . . You know that." Then Mr. Gray brings up the real reason for the call: Mr. Reagan's minimum profits tax . . . He hangs up the phone and telephones Robert B. Peabody, president of the American Iron and Steel Institute, one of his clients. "Bob," he says, "how're you doing? I just had a telephone call with Jim Baker on minimum profits. . . ."

Illusion? By now, it was harder to tell. The get-it-while-you-can attitude of the Reagan years brought a steady stream of clients to the door of the Power House. But while business was thriving, it was also changing. As his Ursula Meese-style access-mongering began to work, Gray gravitated toward big contracts with clients a lot more questionable than the government of Canada. Gray and Company "was a company without a moral rudder," said Sheila Tate, a former Hill and Knowlton employee and later Nancy Reagan's press secretary, discussing the firm's controversial clientele; the only criterion Gray seemed to have in selecting his clients was the size of their wallets.

Most of Gray's international accounts were right-wing governments tied closely to the intelligence community or businessmen with the same connections. Gray represented Adnan Khashoggi, the "self-employed" Saudi Arabian businessman who was involved with Iran-contra. "Khashoggi was notorious for using us and not paying us," a senior Gray and Company employee said. Another questionable client was the government of Haiti during the reign of the murderous "Baby Doc" Duvalier. The Gray rationalization would have been dazzling if it weren't so appalling. Adonis Hoffman, a self-described liberal, was one of the executives who worked on the account: "The Haitian people were suffering. . . . We were working for the people in this hemisphere who have the lowest standard of living, who are entrenched in the deepest poverty." One of the reasons the Haitian people were so poor, of course, was the systematic pillaging of resources by the government Gray and Company represented. Baby Doc was using this devastatingly poor country's meager resources to pay, among other things, Washington's most expensive PR and lobbying firm to improve his image.

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Domestically, one of the more notorious reputations Gray tried to sanitize was that of American fugitive Marc Rich. A billionaire, Rich fled to Switzerland in 1983 to avoid a 65-count criminal indictment. A year later his company, Marc Rich & Co., AG, pleaded guilty to 38 counts of tax evasion and paid a $150 million fine. Gray and Company turned the fine into a celebration—a media event. The deal was announced with great fanfare by New York's then-U.S. Attorney Rudolph Guliani, who accepted a huge, oversized check as if he had just won the Publisher's Clearinghouse Sweepstakes. The fine was publicized as one of the largest in American history. In reality, though, it was pocket change for Rich, who was charged with gouging the American taxpayers for as much as Charles Keating had with his savings and loan boondoggles.

Another Gray catch was the Teamsters Union. Jackie Presser, a former car thief and one of a long line of corrupt Teamster officials, saw in Gray not just an effective lobbyist but a man who could confer social and political acceptability. "That was the odd couple. . . . Jackie just worshiped the ground Bob walked on. You know why? Because Bob was sort of the image of respectability and elegance and grace, and represented polite Washington society. And he accepted Jackie," said Mark Moran, a Gray and Company official.

Gray worked hard at maintaining the relationship. In Washington, he held a 50th birthday party for Presser at The Palm restaurant, known for the caricatures of famous people on its walls. At Gray's behest, Moran performed a service that typified the Gray touch: "I arranged to get Jackie's picture put up at The Palm. . . . We arranged for the table, and then we waited to see if Jackie picked it up. He didn't see it. . . . Then Bob showed it to him, and Jackie went bananas. He thought that was the greatest thing," Moran remembered. "They put it next to the picture of Eugene McCarthy. . . . They couldn't have picked a better place."

Not all of Gray's efforts went so smoothly. One especially embarrassing incident involved the government of Morocco. Gray had pioneered a number of innovative PR techniques, such as "video news releases." The idea was to get television networks and local radio and television stations to air these advertisements as their own news stories. Gray and Company had started with a radio show called "Washington Spotlight." During these programs, the radio stations did not disclose that they were produced by Gray and Company or that Gray had been paid by clients to do them. But by 1984, "Washington Spotlight" was a big success: There were 656 subscribers to the "Gray and Company Network," and another 1,476 stations in the Mutual Broadcasting System and National Public Radio Network that received the program by satellite each month. Soon the program was being broadcast bi-weekly.

Riding this success, Gray decided to try the same idea on television. The company's PR packages began appearing on CNN as news stories: In March 1985, it sent by satellite "an exclusive interview" with King Hassan II, the autocratic ruler of Morocco. At the time, the king was being criticized for signing a treaty with Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi. In a standup outside the palace, a Gray correspondent warned viewers that the West should not react harshly to the treaty and that any criticism of Morocco should be "tempered with the acknowledgement" of the country's strategic importance to the United States.

CNN and Channel 5 in Washington ran the story as if it were their their own. At no time did either the network or the station disclose that Morocco was a Gray client that was paying the firm a minimum of $360,000 to improve its image in the United States, or that Morocco had paid Gray and Company to produce the piece. Eventually, it ended in embarrassment after *The Washington Post* revealed that CNN was running videos made for clients of Gray and Company as news stories.

Clientitis

The obvious impetus to take on clients like Hassan was the huge fees Gray could collect. And the more money a client had, the more pressure there was internally to gouge him. "You'd see hours pop up any time a client had money," Carter Clews, a Gray and Company senior vice president explained. "I remember [one executive] pointed out that no phone call takes less than an hour. 'Always keep that in mind,' he said, 'once you pick up that phone, that's an hour. It doesn't matter how long you talk.' "

Another Gray and Company vice president remembered a client who was billed for expenses associated with a party to which he was not even invited. She said wine bought as Christmas gifts for clients was secretly included in their bills the following month. She maintained that even Gray's practice of taking clients' children to the circus each year, for which the company got credit in the press, was eventually charged back to the clients.

The urge to make the big bucks, combined with fiascos like Morocco's, impelled Gray to sell his firm in 1986. In true Gray fashion, he cut a sweetheart deal: In June 1986, JWT Group, Inc. agreed to buy Gray and Company and make it a part of its subsidiary, Hill and Knowlton. The merger agreement

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created an entirely new division of Hill and Knowlton called Hill and Knowlton Public Affairs Worldwide and put Gray in charge as its chairman. Hill and Knowlton returned Gray to its board of directors and made him chairman of its policy committee.

Gray matter

But Gray's charm by the end of the eighties was wearing thin. The anything-goes Reagan era was over, and compounding Gray's poor judgment in clients was a growing public distrust of lobbying. Influence-peddling abuses were starting to surface, and Americans literally began to pay for them. The cozy relationships among the lobbyists, Congress, and the executive branch became publicly evident in one scandal after another. Members of Congress worked in tandem with lobbyists to generate "grassroots" support for pet issues. The White House had recruited lobbyists to help with controversial appointees needing Senate confirmation. The very organizations designed to protect America from an abusive system had become part of the system, and Gray was predictably in the middle of it. Still, his connections were strong enough to keep his clients out of trouble.

In 1989, HUD investigators were looking into contributions made to a charity called Food for Africa by consultants and housing developers with whom Thomas T. Demery, the assistant secretary for housing, routinely worked. During the first 20 months after Demery assumed his HUD position, Food for Africa raised $546,000, more than half of which came from companies and individuals who had interests in HUD housing programs. In the nine months prior to that, Food for Africa had raised $34,000.

California Rep. Tom Lantos, whose government operations subcommittee had oversight of HUD programs, began hearings into influence-peddling at HUD in the spring of 1990. Just before Demery was scheduled to testify, he hired Hill and Knowlton to advise him on how best to make his case to the news media and Congress. Remarkably, Lantos announced at the hearing that the subcommittee was not going to investigate the relationship between Food for Africa and HUD contractors, a key portion of the inspector general's report that had started the HUD investigation in the first place.

Why not? Back in 1985, Lantos and Illinois Rep. John Porter had founded the Congressional Human Rights Foundation, and in 1988 Lantos had asked Gray to donate office space at Washington Harbour, one of the most expensive addresses in town, for the foundation. The Hill and Knowlton switchboard forwarded calls to the foundation. A private nonprofit organization, the foundation was dedicated to publicizing human rights abuses around the world. Ironically, it did not have to look much farther than its landlord's clients to find governments with poor human rights records—Haiti, Turkey, Indonesia, South Korea, Morocco, and China are some of the world's most egregious human rights abusers.

But even friends in the right places can do only so much to offset a string of bad publicity. Gray signed on the Church of Scientology, and later *Time* magazine ran a highly critical cover story titled, "Scientology—The Cult of Greed." He also signed a contract with the Catholic Church, agreeing to help change public attitudes towards abortion, a move that prompted severe public criticism as well as internal bickering at the firm. Other clients included the People's Republic of China—after the Tiananmen Square massacre. And then there was Citizens for a Free Kuwait, a client the company may never recover from. (See sidebar, page 16.)

In the wake of so much bad publicity, staffers began abandoning the firm for greener, and possibly cleaner, pastures. The biggest blow came in April 1991, when four top Hill and Knowlton executives publicly and abruptly left to start a competing firm, Capitoline. As more and more top executives left, morale dipped to an all-time low. From a staff of 250 during the Persian Gulf war, the office now had 90 people. Rows of offices now sat empty, and Hill and Knowlton alumni could only laugh when they recalled the fights over who got the offices along the Potomac River.

In the fall of 1991, with Gray's contract due to expire, many expected him to retire. After all, he would be 70 years old. Had he finally taken one too many controversial clients, been implicated in one too many scandals? Was he ready to call it quits?

Of course not. Bob Gray signed on for another three years. And the illusion of power is certain to continue.

How much reality remains? A former Gray and Company executive gives an answer that goes to the heart of why Americans around the country have become so distrustful of Washington. "We were thought to be real because we were thought to have the influence and the access and the power and the understanding of how the system worked. It became almost a self-fulfilling kind of myth. The more people gave us credit for doing things, the more influential and effective we became. There is no answer to the question of was it real or was it just hype to protect [Gray's] own veneer. But the story is it didn't matter. It didn't matter to people here and it didn't matter to the clients and it didn't matter to the media, because everybody was playing the game." □

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WHO'S WHO

Bill Clinton's 55-minute acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention continues to worry his advisers. What concerns them, they confide, is his inability to decide what is truly important. A 90-minute session with reporters on his campaign plane late in July only heightened this concern. Several reporters got so bored that they drifted away or dozed off. Another reporter notes that at town meetings Clinton "often takes questions for 40 or 50 minutes, and he generally answers each one with a mini-speech of enough length that his questioners generally get tired and sit down well before the end of his answers to their queries." . . .

Among the likely members of a **Clinton** administration are **Tim Wirth** as head of EPA, **Marian Wright Edelman** as head of the Department of Health and Human Services, and **Warren Christopher** as secretary of state. **Lee Hamilton** will also be considered for secretary of state, but the betting is that Clinton would rather keep an ally in the chairmanship of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. . . .

As for **George Bush**'s advisers, their main concern remains the president's bizarre answers to questions, responses which have kept alive speculation that he suffers from a mental impairment caused by either a slight stroke or medication. Dr. **Michael Alexander** told *The New Republic* that "Bush's brain is not wired properly" but that this "brain problem" "doesn't affect the clarity of his thought—probably." One example of Bush's problem is when he was asked about the leaks of EPA head **William Reilly**'s memorandum urging a more cooperative position at the Rio environmental summit:

"I'd like to find the leaker and I'd like to see the leaker filed—fired. Filed would be all right. No, but the reason is, it's very difficult to conduct government if somebody, in his or her infinite wisdom, can shape the wisdom by leaking documents." . . .

If Bush is serious about finding the leaker, the most likely suspects are **David McIntosh**, the executive director of **Dan Quayle**'s Council on Competitiveness, and White House aide **Theresa Gorman**, who is said to have convinced **Clayton Yeutter** to persuade Bush not to sign the Rio treaty. . . .

You may wonder why one of Quayle's staffers would leak information embarrassing to **George Bush**. Bush loyalists don't find it very mysterious. According to a White House informant, they suspect the vice president's staff has been pursuing its own agenda without regard to the president's interests. . . .

Some insiders blame **Robert Teeter** as much as **Sam Skinner** for the pre-convention chaos within the Bush campaign. They wonder why Teeter, who they say was largely responsible for **Dick Thornburgh**'s loss in Pennsylvania's 1991 Senate race, was entrusted with so much power over Bush's fortunes in 1992. As for the turmoil at the White House, the blame seemed to lie with Skinner alone. The disorganization was so bad that staffers often were unsure who had the power to decide a wide range of matters. A comic result was that a memo was almost certain to have several addressees because the writer had to be sure it would reach all the people who might actually have the authority to handle the issue. . . .

One White House source told Who's Who that he was amazed that Bush had forgotten how much he was helped in the 1988 campaign by the pro-environment stand he took at Boston Harbor. . . .

The same source expressed regret that Bush had vetoed the campaign finance bill, missing the chance to ally himself with reformers who are trying to level the playing field for congressional races. The person who is said to have been behind the veto was the White House counsel, **C. Boyden Gray**. . . .

According to *Roll Call*'s **Timothy Burger**, **Dan Quayle**, who has been attacking overstaffing on Capitol Hill, has had two teenage sons work there, one as a mail carrier at the Senate Post Office and the other as a page, at salaries of approximately $1,000 a month. . . .

Speaking of Capitol Hill, **Jack Russ**, who resigned as sergeant at arms after presiding over the House Bank scandal, has been rehired as a part-time aide to Rep. **Mervyn Dymally**. . . .

One of the enduring mysteries of the Watergate burglary is why it was committed. What did the burglars—or their bosses—hope to find at the Democratic National Committee headquarters? According to **Sam Dash**, the chief counsel of **Sam Ervin**'s Watergate committee, who recently discussed the subject with *The Washington Lawyer*:

"We had some proof that [**Richard**] **Nixon** was always afraid that he might be exposed and embarrassed by the activities of his brother, who was associated at times with Mafia people and with **Howard Hughes**. **Larry O'Brien** [chair of the DNC] had also been a consultant to Hughes and had been privy to the information. We got a tip that Nixon had asked [**John**] **Mitchell** [the Nixon attorney general and campaign head who signed off on the burglary] to get an investigator to develop all the dirt that the Democrats could have picked up on his brother."

The main reason Nixon was so concerned was that during California's 1962 gubernatorial election, which he lost to **Pat Brown**, information about his brother's relationship with Hughes had been used by the Democrats to embarrassing effect. "Nixon," says Dash, "was worried about this sort of thing happening again." . . .

Another of Nixon's problems is explained in **Walter Isaacson**'s absorbing new biography of **Henry Kissinger**. Nixon was fond of martinis, and, according to one of his top aides, **John Ehrlichman**, "it didn't take a whole lot of gin to get him sloshed." Kissinger would tell his staff that he was the one man who kept "that drunken lunatic" from doing things that would blow up the world. . . .

—*Susan Threadgill*

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Gang of Three

Meet the real Democratic Party bosses: teachers' unions, government employees, and the AARP.

by Chris Mitchell

Drawing by Chris Robertson

Just before Bill Clinton's speech at the AFSCME convention last summer, the inside word was that the candidate would give a gloves-off, fire-in-the-belly performance. He'd speak the hard truths about cutting government payrolls; he'd talk about unpadding pensions; he'd talk about responsibility and sacrifice and biting the bullet. Clinton, it appeared, was going to lecture a government union, one of the most powerful of the country's special interests, on issues vital to its members, and grab your belts with both hands folks because *he wasn't going to blink.*

Clinton didn't blink—he winked. He told the American Federation of *State, County, and Municipal* Employees that he planned to shrink the country's distended bureaucracy by cutting 100,000 unnecessary souls from—wait for it—the *federal* payroll. And even those cuts would be by attrition. The audience was euphoric and party officials lauded Clinton's plan as an act of political bravery.

Of course, Clinton's proposal was as gutsy as telling a convention of yacht owners that he planned to impose a tax on private airplanes. And while that sort of pandering is nothing new for politicians, Clinton—like Walter Mondale, Michael Dukakis, and thousands of state and local Democrats throughout the country—has been especially careful to kow-tow to three particular special interest groups: government unions, teachers' unions, and the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP).

With the unions, the candidate's obeisance, like that of his party, brings easy dollars and a reliable voting bloc squarely into the Democrat's corner, while the spoils of the elderly lobby must be shared with the Republicans. But the Democrats' efforts to woo all three groups stifles productive debate on several

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Democratic articles of faith—like making government work, reforming public schools, and getting a fair shake for the poor.

These interest groups should be rapped for their failure to compromise on common-sense reforms and for trying to make their parochial desires sound like a national consensus. But the real blame belongs to Democrats who, like Clinton at the AFSCME convention, are mainlining on interest group cash and clout and lack the wherewithal to just say no.

If you still believe the old saw that no army is strong enough to stop an idea whose time has come, you're probably not familiar with these three interest groups. Their power was made possible by 1968 reforms to the Democrats' nomination process. The current primary- and caucus-based system curtails the role of the party bosses and greatly enhances that of special interests. Today these groups are strong enough to straitjacket ideas they oppose.

Take education reform. On some issues teachers' unions like the National Education Association (NEA) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) *have* gotten behind long overdue reforms. Leaders have called for increased funding for Head Start and opposed private tuition tax credits. But what about teacher competency testing and merit pay raises?

Forget it. Teachers, according to these unions, shouldn't be judged by their performance or that of their pupils. And challenges to this thinking by Democratic politicians have been rare and perilous. In 1988, Dukakis helped scuttle competency testing for Massachusetts' veteran teachers, a move that helped him win NEA's support in his presidential bid. Even more discouraging has been Clinton's abandonment of the issue. In 1983, he helped push through the Arkansas state legislature a one-time-only teacher competency test requirement. Ten percent of the state's instructors promptly failed their first bout with the eighth-grade-level exam, and some 3.5 percent eventually skulked from the classroom. Despite this record, don't expect much from Clinton on national education reform: His campaign headquarters spews out the same rhetoric about teacher testing that you're likely to get about pot smoking—the candidate had a youthful experiment with it in the past, but he'd rather not discuss it now.

Why is Clinton so wary? Because the NEA's clout in selecting the Democratic nominee is legendary. The group's early endorsement of Jimmy Carter in 1976 helped convince the rest of organized labor that Carter was worthy of its support. Four years later, the NEA sent 481 delegates to the Democratic National Convention to scream their thanks to Carter for delivering a record increase in education funding and, in what was perhaps the biggest political payoff in American history, a new Cabinet-level Department of Education.

At this year's Democratic convention, one in ten delegates on the floor of Madison Square Garden was an NEA member, and each represented just a fraction of the support the union has lavished on Clinton and other Democratic candidates across the nation in campaign mailings, phone banks, and event organization. And then there's the loot. NEA's $2.5 million in gifts made it the Democrats' top donor in the 1990 congressional elections; affiliates contributed roughly twice that amount to state legislative races.

Many of us already pay a price for the unseemly courtship of the Democrats by these teachers' unions. Today, as always, a New York teacher can be a convicted felon and still be guaranteed a place on the public payroll until the case is referred to a disciplinary hearing. In Massachusetts, one local school district has spent half a million dollars on legal fees trying to fire one teacher defended by the union, while another arbitration case in Boston has dragged on for five years. Still, Republican Governor William Weld found himself nearly alone when he proposed abolishing teacher tenure and absolute seniority protections. "We're getting killed on this," said one Weld administration aide who watched 12,000 angry teachers gather on the governor's lawn in June while a barrage of union-funded radio ads assailed the reform proposals.

And in New Jersey, where an alternative certification program allows bright, recent college graduates to bypass teachers' colleges and move straight into the classroom, unions convinced politicians to hassle non-degree teachers with night and summer courses, a requirement that detracts from the time they can spend teaching students and preparing lessons.

What Democratic politicians haven't figured out is that when it comes to winning the support of teachers' unions, they have a natural advantage: Republicans couldn't give a damn about public schools—they'd rather exit them via vouchers or replace them with a private scheme like Chris Whittle's Edison Project. And the public school teachers know it. To fight for public school *students*, Democrats need only muster the nerve.

Party poopers

Like the NEA, government unions like AFSCME, the American Federation of Government Employees, the Postal Workers Union, and the National Treasury Employees Union are all fixtures of Democratic politics. For a case study in how they operate, look at AFSCME. The union boasts 1.4 million members

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who are twice as likely to vote as the average American and who pull along "solidarity" votes from their families. Its PAC, with $1.5 million in contributions to congressional candidates in the 1990 election cycle and $323,000 in soft money, ranked fourth among Democratic party benefactors. And no statistic captures the impact of its most powerful political weapon: hands-on campaigning through union hall phone banks, union-produced mailings, and armies of committed campaign volunteers.

So when AFSCME talks, politicians pander. "There are too many people out there who act as if they were elected by AFSCME rather than the voters," says Wendell Cox, a veteran adviser on government efficiency who's worked with both liberal and conservative administrations throughout the country.

AFSCME banks its political clout most by stymieing common-sense reforms like making government more efficient. It's obvious that local and federal bureaucracies at every level are swollen. Former New York City Mayor Ed Koch believes that if he had been able to suspend a single civil service requirement just once—the one establishing seniority as the sole factor in determining who survives layoffs—the city could have sustained a 20 percent reduction in its work force and provided better service to its citizens. But such reforms are non-starters at all levels, because unions and their Democratic toadies oppose them.

Pruning the bureaucracy would be a sensible beginning, but to hold on to the good performers the government should eliminate "bumping," the reduction-in-force practice by which a tenured employee, when his slot is cut, can simply shove out a younger, perhaps better, worker and swipe his job. Such reforms would allow enough career, nonpolitical workers to carry the institutional memory forward from one administration to the next.

If increased efficiency is a low priority for unions, saving money doesn't even make the list. Nationwide, state and local public employee compensation grew four times faster than comparable private sector wages during the eighties, while state government was growing at twice the rate of the national population.

Despite the disturbing arithmetic, when politicians address the public employees' unions, they're more inclined to bone up on the new math than say something unpopular. Clinton tends to limit himself to gaseous platitudes like his recent remark to AFSCME: "It's time for a revolution in the American workplace that will raise the status of the American worker and tear down the Berlin Wall between labor and management." While Clinton utters vagaries about "reinventing government," he's never endorsed the reform movement's basic message: that good government must allow its managers to hire, promote, transfer, and fire employees.

Pension for trouble

The Democrats are no better at standing up to AARP, but here the party's behavior is heretical as well as spineless. After all, you might expect Republicans to side with the greedy geezers who have made the mere mention of Social Security reform off-limits. But the Democrats? Blessing AARP's refusal to bend on trimming entitlements for the elderly belies the party's "little guy" rhetoric.

Social Security, Medicare, and federal and military pensions account for half of a 1992 federal budget that will boast a record $400 billion deficit. Even with the modest cost-cutting measures now being proposed by the White House, such entitlements will still grow to nearly 60 percent of the budget by 1997. Because Social Security benefits are largely insulated from taxation, income taxes paid by an upper-middle-class elderly family amount to less than half those paid by a working family with the same income.

Before Clinton became a household name, he showed some spleen on this issue. Back in 1986, when the deficit was much smaller but a more popular concern, he endorsed the idea of a cap on entitlement spending. But while campaigning in Florida's gray belt last fall, he attacked truth-teller Paul Tsongas for suggesting—it wasn't even a proposal—that cost-of-living adjustments could be limited for Social Security recipients whose income is more than $125,000. This bit of demagoguery put the fear of Tsongas in retirees and helped Clinton win the primary.

Though an evenly divided membership forces the AARP to remain party-neutral, its information network presents both political parties with a formidable obstacle to rationally downsizing elderly benefits. With a mailing list that reaches nearly half of all Americans over 50, a group that happens to vote more regularly that its younger counterparts, AARP has helped seniors safeguard their due and then some. Politicians like Clinton balk at elderly entitlements issues while running, so that once in office, they lack the mandate to address them.

Unholy trinity

The Democrats' aversion to battling the combined might of government unions, teachers' unions, and AARP protects a range of thorny issues from serious scrutiny. After all, if Democrats won't question the

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millions in Social Security benefits now slated to line the pockets of the wealthy, or demand greater excellence in our government and public schools, no one will. And though cowering to these three groups for alms and votes is by now a sort of family tradition, Clinton's acquiescence is a bitter disappointment. After all, seven years ago he looked ready to rise to the fight when he founded the centrist Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) in an effort to take the Democratic Party beyond traditional liberal remedies. Overweight, brain-dead unions and grasping entitlement seekers had been on notice for the first time. But while Clinton has continued to push for many of the DLC's goals—such as a national service plan—as a presidential candidate he sounds more like another concubine than the man who's come to close down the harem. Having fought his way onto the party's bully pulpit, he has so far been unwilling to use it. He has between now and November to find some courage and lead. □

The Washington Monthly JOURNALISM AWARD

FOR MAY 1992 IS PRESENTED TO:

Pat Collins, WRC TV

The Montgomery County, Maryland, work crew punched in at 7 a.m. and headed straight for an hour-and-nine-minute sit-down breakfast—on taxpayer time. Five-and-a-half hours later, after stops at two more restaurants, a roadside break, and a leisurely drive around the county, the three-man crew had clocked just over one hour of work. The crews' flouting of work rules was just one of a handful of abuses exposed in Collins' five-part series, "Hardly Working," focusing on public work teams in D.C., Maryland, and Virginia. WRC's hidden cameras filmed work teams hanging out in parks, in front of liquor stores, or simply in their vehicles for hours on end. Although Collins' May 10-14 series failed to pinpoint who was responsible for the sloppy management—which would have entailed sifting through the layers of supervisors and administrators paid to oversee worker performance—and did not take the time to actually interview the workers, the piece graphically brought to life a tried-and-true story of municipal waste.

Hobart Rowan, *The Washington Post*

When *Post* columnist Hobart Rowan was told by doctors at Georgetown University Hospital in March 1991 that he was suffering from an advanced case of bladder cancer, he followed their advice and immediately began intensive chemotherapy treatment. But as doctors at another hospital confirmed a few weeks later, he had been misdiagnosed and was suffering instead from a rare form of prostrate cancer. Fortunately for Rowan, the hormone treatment he now receives for the cancer has been successful, but were it not for his aggressive action once he suspected a mistake, there's no telling how long the mistreatment would have proceeded. Rowan's May 12 story documented that sloppy, sometimes callous, treatment will occur even at the nation's finest hospitals and highlighted the importance of patient vigilance. "My advice?" he writes. "Ask questions. Demand more information. Insist on explanations."

FOR JUNE 1992 IS PRESENTED TO:

Roger Parloff, *The American Lawyer*

In the June issue, Parloff reappraises the Rodney King verdict from a vantage point that few newspaper or television reports on the trial ever bothered to take: that of the jury. After an exacting analysis of the trial evidence—including a blow-by-blow study of who hit King and why—Parloff concludes that Simi Valley's now-notorious jurors produced a defensible verdict. Parloff's reading of the videotape at the center of the case is occasionally over-generous; he all but excuses a series of blows at the moment that King surrenders. But one needn't agree with his conclusion to appreciate that the details of this trial were widely, even irresponsibly, caricatured by the media and that race may have been far less relevant in this case than previously thought.

The Monthly Journalism Award is presented each month to the best newspaper, magazine, television, or radio story (or series of stories) on our political system. Nominations for any newspaper, magazine, or radio or television station in the country are welcome. The subject can be government in its federal, state, or municipal manifestation. Please send nominations to Monthly Journalism Award, 1611 Connecticut Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20009. Two copies of the article or broadcast text should accompany the nomination.

Nominations for stories published or aired in September will close October 15. The winner will be announced in the December issue.

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Repoll Man

One politician's solution to the preelection polls that almost sunk him: one more poll.

by Phil Keisling

Secretary of state

Incumbent trails well-known Roberts

By Brad Cain
The Associated Press

SALEM — The secretary of state's race has been a topsy-turvy affair that defies conven-

Keisling touts his reputation for fairness and integrity.

He notes that he drew praise from Republicans and Democrats alike when he drew up new boundaries for legislative dis-

THE OREGONIAN, FRIDAY, APRIL 10, 1992

Secretary of state poll puts Roberts, Miller atop races

© 1992, Oregonian Publishing Co.

By DAN HORTSCH
of The Oregonian staff

SECRETARY OF STATE

Republican preference

Labor Commissioner Mary

Keisling defeats Roberts, will challenge Miller for state post

PORTLAND (AP) — Secretary of State Phil Keisling says that at least he's no longer struggling for name recognition.

Keisling's defeat of State Labor Commissioner Mary Wendy Roberts for the Democratic nomination to secretary of state was a triumph over one of the best known names in Oregon politics.

Keisling will face Republican Randy Miller in the general election.

Roberts has held her post since 1979 and is stepdaughter of Gov. Barbara Roberts, who appointed Keisling as secretary of state and supported him in the election.

Phil Keisling

Randy Miller

Keisling had served just one term as a state representative when the governor appointed him to replace her as secretary of state.

With 98 percent of precincts reporting early today, Keisling had 148,875 votes, or 46 percent, to 125,907, or 39 percent for Roberts.

Miller, a state representative from Lake Oswego, easily defeated state Sen. Bill Kennemer of Milwaukie for the GOP nomination.

Miller had 147,965 votes, or 60 percent, to 96,892 votes, or 40 percent for Kennemer.

Readers of the May 16, 1992, *Oregonian* couldn't help but draw a conclusion about my bid to win the Democratic nomination for secretary of state, Oregon's second ranking state office: I was toast.

With just three days until the primary, I was 11 points behind my chief rival, the state's four-term labor commissioner, Mary Wendy Roberts. True, I'd made some progress. Six weeks earlier, I'd been 25 points behind, according to an earlier *Oregonian* poll. But this 11-point gap, so close to the election, was bleak news. I began working on my concession speech.

Three days later I scored an "upset" victory by a convincing seven-point margin. So what happened? What combination of my brilliant strategy and/or my opponent's strategic blunders had tipped the balance? Did all the newspaper endorsements turn the tide? My record of redistricting the legislature and conducting aggressive performance audits of government programs? Or was it the stirring Aaron Copeland music that accompanied my television commercials?

Damned if I know. And neither the *Oregonian* nor anyone else seemed interested in finding out. That's because, beyond the requisite exit polls—whose sole object is to establish the winner as early as possible—polling almost always stops on election day, depriving candidates and voters of answers to a question more important than "who?" *Why*?

The why of elections could easily be answered with another poll, a day or two after the fact, asking voters what factors influenced their decisions. This sort of postmortem would shed light on how to fine-tune future preelection polls. Postelection polls might even wean the press and deep-pocket contributors—who often affect races by making more than they

Phil Keisling is a contributing editor of The Washington Monthly *and Oregon's secretary of state.*

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should of these surveys—from their current poll addiction. But perhaps their most important function would be served well after the election is over. Postelection polls might give all of us a better sense of what is important to American voters.

Poll cats

The absence of postelection surveys is puzzling, given the increasing prevalence of media-financed polling, and it's not just the CBSs and *Newsweeks* of the world that devote tens, or hundreds, of thousands of dollars to preelection surveys. Today, a growing number of daily newspapers and local TV stations are rushing into the act. More and more, their polls are going beyond the "top of the ticket" presidential and senatorial races to include state, mayoral, and even city council contests.

Media-sponsored polls have considerable appeal for candidates (we save money) and also a broader logic. When major candidates conduct their own polls, they inevitably try to spin the results to gullible journalists. Thus, there's arguably civic value in surveys that can be characterized as "objective." However, as my race illustrates, there are real dangers in this trend. For one, polls can mislead by testing name familiarity rather than true preference. They can also be downright inaccurate if the questions are badly phrased or a sample improperly drawn. For example, a poll that samples from all registered voters—rather than from the much smaller pool of voters likely to cast ballots in a particular election—will often give a much different (and less accurate) picture.

Yet perhaps most damaging aren't the numbers themselves, but how they play out in a campaign—creating a phenomenon similar to the Heisenberg uncertainty principle known to physicists. Scientists have learned that the mere act of looking at certain subatomic particles in itself disrupts the reality of what's there. (In a nutshell, the light waves necessary for "seeing" the particles change their location.) The political version of this phenomenon occurs when polls, especially inaccurate ones, create their own political reality. A candidate at the short end of an early poll—one who seems to be lacking "big Mo"—can suddenly find fundraising calls unreturned and volunteers vanishing. Candidates don't have the resources to get their message out; reporters write about a "struggling effort"; and so on, in a familiar downward spiral. In effect, the media's quest for news creates news itself. Unfortunately, that news isn't always based on terra firma.

Inaccurate polls occasionally afflict higher-profile races, too. Two days before the 1990 Senate race in New Jersey, the Newark *Star Ledger* reported the results of a poll that showed Bill Bradley burying Republican challenger Christine Todd Whitman by 17 points. On election night, Bradley escaped with a three-point victory. In the Michigan gubernatorial race that same year, the *Detroit Free Press* published a poll that forecast a 14-point drubbing for Republican challenger John Englar. Governor Englar, as he is now known, won by .1 percent of the vote.

Of course, the bigger the candidates, the more they can protect themselves from bad polling. Misleading or inaccurate polls in presidential or U.S. Senate races are produced against a backdrop where issues are more prominent and voters have at least heard candidates' names. Incumbents and hopefuls alike have more options for fighting back and engaging voter attention. But in more obscure races like mine, sexy issues can be hard to come by, and finding money for a mailing or two—much less for constant polling—can be difficult. Getting the public to even notice your race is hard enough. Indeed, beyond a handful of highly visible contests, voter interest in the lower end of the ballot plunges precipitously. It's here that polling can do the most damage.

In my own race, I had some ammunition to help fight the tyranny of polls. Before the first one showed me 25 points behind, we paid $12,000 for our own survey. We called 2,000 people and, by screening out unlikely voters, produced a sample size of 600. In this survey, we were just seven points behind. The *Oregonian* poll had not screened and used just 283 respondents. Thus, we had a plausible spin when potential supporters questioned our ability to win.

Still, the media's polls had a visible effect on my campaign—though not, interestingly, on the general public. In my encounters with voters, few even seemed to know about these polls, much less take an interest in them. Yet almost every time I went to a fundraiser or called a political colleague, the topic came up. And the dim news from the *Oregonian* directly affected our ability to raise money, especially from the political action committees and corporations that tend to gravitate toward likely winners.

Despite my incumbent status, I failed to receive endorsements from many of the major PACs interested in my race—such as organized labor and teachers. While my major opponent raised more than half of her funds from PACs and corporations, we ended up raising more than 80 percent of our money from individuals.

The sins of errant polls are multiplied when news organizations conduct no postelection surveys. Such surveys would likely tell us, in those instances in which preelection polls were wide of the mark, what exactly happened and why surveys failed to predict it. We might, for instance, discover that people are

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inclined to change their minds at the last minute—which might make PACs more careful about exerting influence early in a race, when fledgling candidates are most vulnerable. Or we could learn that a given poll was poorly conceived—which would help us frame future polls so that they are more accurate and, therefore, more fair.

Currently, the closest the media come to postelection surveys are the ubiquitous exit polls conducted on election day. But even here, the primary motivation is to allow an early call—"We beat CBS by 12 minutes on the Utah senate race!"—rather than to gain an in-depth understanding of the ebb and flow of voter decisionmaking.

Political junkies are more interested in putting a wreath around the winner, interviewing the loser, and preparing for the next trifecta than they are in a sober appraisal of what happened and why.

In the absence of postelection empirical data, journalists and political pundits are that much more inclined to speculate. Not surprisingly, their theories often look like efforts to rationalize their preelection analysis. Or they latch on to a clearly definable moment in a race, imbue it with great weight and meaning, and present it as a key turning point. They thereby cover an election much as a sportswriter covers a game, attributing a team's comeback to a key double play or an interception.

The conventional wisdom in Washington, D.C., for instance, attributed 1990's last-minute surge by mayoral candidate Sharon Pratt Kelly directly to an endorsement by *The Washington Post*—a winning three-pointer at the buzzer, as it were. But in contrast to sports contests, what happens in voting booths is beyond the public eye. And, especially in local campaigns, there's a general reluctance to look too hard behind the curtain, to try to ascertain (however inexactly) what really led voters in the end to prefer Candidate A to Candidate B.

Was it Kelly's promise to cut the lackluster city bureaucracy that put her over the top? Was it her tough-on-crime rhetoric? No one asked. The cynical might attribute that lack of curiosity to media self-protection. After all, if voters' explanations of their behavior are wildly at odds with the preelection (and election night) handicapping, it raises questions about the acumen of the reporting staff.

Still, I think a likelier explanation is a simpler one: the continuing obsession among political insiders with the horse-race aspect of American politics. Staffers, lobbyists, reporters, contributors, consultants, and political junkies are more interested in putting a wreath around the winner, interviewing the loser, and preparing for the next trifecta than they are in a sober appraisal of what happened and why. On election night and afterward, the insiders don't much care. They are elated or discouraged—but in either event it's time to move on.

Leaving an air of mystery around the final tally, not even trying to peek into the black box, allows bedrock assumptions to go unchallenged. It's all the easier to fall back on your favorite explanations, confident that, win or lose, you really do know the business.

But to understand what the public is missing, all you have to do is look at one race in which the media didn't retreat immediately after the returns: Harris Wofford's run for one of Pennsylvania's Senate seats last year. Largely because the race involved a national figure, former Attorney General Richard Thornburgh, it attracted extraordinary attention. And when David handily whipped Goliath, there was deep curiosity as to why. What postelection polls confirmed—a fervent desire among the Pennsylvania middle class for health-care reform—is now rippling through races across the country.

Polling is clearly here to stay. If anything, future elections will use it even more frequently. (Look at presidential polls that have been issued on an almost daily basis since last spring.) And because we're going to have to live with them, it's important that we better understand them. We need to recognize the inherent limitations in the predictive power of surveys—and the dangers in giving them too much prominence. Even more important is taking full advantage of polls as an opportunity to better understand voters. It's time the media use their considerable resources to help explain to us—including those out there running, gabbing, and fundraising—what the voters are really trying to say. □

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MEMO OF THE MONTH

JAN 24 1992

INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY

FROM: /S/ Richard T. Crowder, Under Secretary
for International Affairs and
Commodity Programs

SUBJECT: No Comment

Some weeks ago you requested that FAS linguists find out for you how to say "no comment" in a variety of foreign languages. After considerable conversations with the Foreign Service Institute's instructional staff we have developed the attached materials which come as close as we can to capturing the nuances of "no comment" in 10 languages ranging from Arabic to Thai.

The materials are presented in three forms: (1) summary sheet, (2) index cards, and (3) tape.

Attachments

cc: OES, IACP, CCO

FAS/EC:Chris Goldthwait:sc:720-6301:1/22/92

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Power Play

Think you have a say in whether that nuclear power plant goes up in your back yard? Not any more you don't.

by Christopher Georges

Twenty-four-year-old Jim Horn, an engineer new to California's Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant, was flipping through a copy of the reactor's blueprints when he spotted a design flaw so massive it could have been a Cal-Tech marching band prank. Huge segments of the plant, which was just weeks away from full-power operation, had been assembled backwards. Many of the cables and supports for the two reactors, which were mirror images of each other, had been erected exactly opposite where they should have been. Although construction at the $2.3 billion Southern California plant was 97 percent complete, no one before Horn—not the thousands of engineers and construction workers, not the Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) team of inspectors—had spotted the screw-up.

Horn's finding back in 1981 made a lot of people unhappy, especially at the utility, Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E), and the NRC. Perhaps the only ones who came out pleased were the activists who made sure that the NRC paid attention to Horn's allegations.

It wasn't the first time interveners—a euphemism for the activists best known for stunts like chaining themselves to reactor gates—had helped bring to light flaws at Diablo Canyon. Seven years earlier, before construction had begun, they dug up evidence that the plant site was just three miles from the second largest geologic fault in California. PG&E was forced to build reinforcements. And later, after the botched construction had been uncovered, they pushed the NRC to undertake a full reexamination of the plant's construction, a review that unearthed 111 new safety-related errors. "I don't think any of us anticipated the scope of the problems," said an NRC commissioner at the time.

Christopher Georges is an editor of The Washington Monthly.

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In hindsight, the unrelenting, if often annoying, prodding of activists at Diablo Canyon not only made the plant safer but arguably averted a massive disaster. And Diablo Canyon is just one of nearly a dozen sites where grassroots interveners have rabble-roused the NRC and utilities into fixing defective plants or mothballing clunkers. Sure, the activists can cause construction delays and cost overruns, but in the long run, the record shows that they've made nuclear power safer and smarter.

But now, thanks to a decade-long effort by the industry, and the tacit approval of a utility-friendly NRC, activists and the rest of the public are quietly being regulated out of nuclear power oversight. A spate of NRC rules enacted in the past four years essentially allows the industry to power up the next generation of reactors without having to deal with their long-time nemesis—ordinary citizens like you. And all just in the nick of time: The sagging nuclear power industry, paralyzed by public distrust, skyrocketing costs, and an aging complement of reactors, has been stymied—not a single new reactor has been ordered since 1978. After decades of optimistic projections, the nuclear power industry suddenly finds itself in danger of extinction.

By 1988, the utilities had handed the NRC an ultimatum: Change the rules to muzzle the public, or we won't build another plant.

The industry's logical response to its woes should be, of course, to win back the confidence of the public by shutting down dozens of old, decaying plants and working to replace them with lower-cost, safer plant models. And while there's no question that the industry is lumbering in this direction, it's taking no risks on its financial future: Four new NRC rules, all supported and in some cases co-written by industry lobbyists, will allow utilities to design, construct, refurbish (or not refurbish), and disassemble power plants in coming years while answering to no one but themselves and the NRC. The agency's subtle effort ensures that the businessmen who control the industry will have virtually unchecked control over where, when, and how nuclear power is used in the future. And with a track record like theirs—from Diablo Canyon to Three Mile Island to Shoreham—that's not a particularly comforting thought.

There's little mystery about why the industry has pushed the NRC to change the rules. In the seventies, when it became clear that nuclear power was more expensive than nonnuclear sources, the public mood began to sour. Safety concerns mounted after Three Mile Island, and the enduring waste problem furthered public grumbling.

In the meantime, public interveners had become enraged and savvy enough to litter the plant approval path with enough obstacles to give the utilities fits. By 1978, ordering a nuclear power plant had become a utility's version of Russian roulette. Just ask the managers at the Long Island Lighting Company (LILCO), whose attempt to build Shoreham in the seventies and eighties ran headlong into an angry, unrelenting public who argued that evacuation would be impossible in the event of an accident. After a 20-year struggle, a battle-weary LILCO threw in the towel last February, after spending more than $5 billion.

But you can't really blame feisty granola-eaters for fiascoes like Shoreham and Diablo Canyon. After all, the interveners wouldn't have had a case unless the utilities' work was shoddy and the NRC's oversight lax. And at plants including Allens Creek (Texas), Byron (Illinois), Seabrook (New Hampshire), Midland (Michigan), Comanche Peak (Texas), Zimmer (Ohio), and Jamestown and Shoreham (New York), utilities have given activists plenty of mistakes to capitalize on. And it's hurt them. As cost overruns ran into the billions of dollars and delays ate up years, Wall Street financiers grew gun shy and new funding dried up. By the mid-eighties the industry found itself in a meltdown, unable or unwilling to take on new projects. But instead of heeding the message of more emphasis on safety, it blamed the messenger, saying, as did one industry spokesman recently, that "frivolous intervention is the bane of our existence."

By 1988, the utilities had, in effect, handed the NRC an ultimatum: Change the rules to muzzle the public, or we won't build another plant. The result is new regulations that help ensure the utilities' investment in new plants will bring a guaranteed return, even if it means sacrificing safety.

Here's how the new rules work:

➤*One-step licensing*. Until 1989, the public had two chances to examine and oppose construction of a nuclear power plant before it could operate: the first,

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through hearings before construction that focused on the safety of the plant's design, and the second, through hearings that dealt with the safety of the construction when the plant was nearly complete.

The new "one-step" rule—recently approved by the NRC, but yet to be applied—requires only one hearing just prior to a plant's construction. Industry may now submit a "generic" plant design to the NRC at any time with no specific construction site in mind. The NRC reviews the design and approves or disapproves. Citizens may raise objections, but considering that no one—not even the NRC—knows when or where the industry will eventually build the plant, there is little motivation for citizens to take a close look.

Concerning the plant site, utilities can apply for a permit valid for 20 years. Area residents can raise objections, but, again, considering that no one is sure when, if at all, the plant will be built, there's little incentive to do so.

And what objections can be raised at the one and only hearing? Just those that concern the matching of the design to the site. And what exactly does that mean? "We're still trying to figure that out," says Michael Mariotte of the Nuclear Information and Resource Service, a Washington-based advocacy group opposed to nuclear power.

Radioinactive

Streamlining the licensing process makes bureaucratic sense. But issues such as quality of workmanship simply can't be resolved until the plant is built. Consider the case of Texas' Comanche Peak plant, built in the seventies and eighties. Interveners, contacted by whistleblowers in the early stages of plant construction, revealed an array of problems, including faulty pipe supports, that eventually forced the utility to undertake a five-year, multimillion dollar reconstruction of the plant. And in Midland, Michigan, whistleblower allegations of a sinking foundation eventually led the utility to cancel the plant and convert it to natural gas. In both cases, without the early hearing process, the problems might never have come to light, or even worse, come to light too late.

➤*The evidence rule.* Even where interveners can challenge plant construction under the one-step rule, there are new restrictions on what evidence can be used. In the past, activists were permitted to request a hearing by simply alleging the possibility of a problem. Now, because the NRC doesn't want to waste its time hearing frivolous complaints, the agency requires objectors to produce hard evidence of a problem, such as data supported by studies or outside experts—in other words a virtually proven case—just to get inside the hearing room. The problem is that poorly funded interveners have traditionally built their cases around bits and pieces of information provided by whistleblowers or by NRC staff evaluations. And even when lacking proof positive, some have sounded a justified alarm.

Look at what happened during the construction of the Zimmer, Ohio, plant. Tom Applegate, a security official at the nearly completed plant, informed interveners that plant officials knew of construction flaws but were ignoring them in an effort to keep costs down. Applegate, though far from a nuclear expert, said he had seen enough to suspect that key safety welts—steel reinforcements—were faulty, a problem that experts later concluded could have caused a meltdown. Although Applegate lacked direct evidence, his charges were enough to instigate a new round of public hearings, which revealed, among other problems, falsification of records and evidence that parts of the plant were built with steel purchased from a nearby junkyard instead of the required nuclear-grade steel. In the end, the problems ran so deep that the utility was forced to abandon the project and turn Zimmer into a coal-powered plant.

➤*License renewal.* Because it's cheaper for utilities to keep old plants alive than build new ones, and

"Writing," as *Publishers Weekly* says, "with delicious wit and great seriousness," McCloskey demystifies economic theory and practice to show that behind the economist's claim to certainty is the ancient art of storytelling. "Mr. McCloskey is more interesting on an uninspired day than most of his peers can manage at their very best."
—Peter Passell, *New York Times*

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because many of the nation's 110 nuclear power plants, most of which were built in the fifties and sixties, are nearing the end of their 40-year operating licenses, license renewal has become a top priority in the industry's survival plan. Utilities have long lobbied for permission to keep plants running past their original expiration dates without having to undertake costly, large-scale safety improvements or even answer questions of public safety. Recently, their efforts paid off.

The NRC's license renewal regs, which took effect in January of this year, are the equivalent of a patient giving himself a checkup. A utility seeking a 20-year renewal inspects its own plant for any safety or age-related problems and passes its report onto the NRC. The commission then gives thumbs up or thumbs down. No NRC inspection or public hearing on safety is required (although the NRC can grant one if it so desires). Even worse, old plants have to live up only to plant-specific safety requirements—ones that may have been set as far back as 30 years ago, when standards were far more relaxed.

What can local citizens do if they feel the nearby plant is too rickety to last another score? Nothing, unless you count writing letters to the NRC—letters that the NRC is under no obligation to consider.

This new rule is particularly scary considering that in 1988, NRC Commissioner Kenneth Rogers labeled age-related degradation "a loaded gun, an accident waiting to happen." Consider what happened in 1986 at the then-13-year-old Surry plant in Virginia when water pipes, worn thin by age-related decay, ruptured, killing four workers. Studies since then have shown that similar pipings have been used in nearly 40 other plants, and yet the public still can't challenge the renewal of those plants' licenses.

"The NRC is simply not using common sense," says Robert Pollard, a former NRC official and now a scientist with the Union of Concerned Scientists. "I don't know anything as complicated as a nuclear power plant that can run safely for 40 years, let alone 60."

➤*Plant decommissioning*. Even if plants do get their licenses renewed, they won't run forever. When a plant dies, decommissioning is its burial; it means either dismantling the carcass or simply sealing and cordoning it off. Either way, the costs are immense (up to hundreds of millions of dollars per reactor), and the hazards, such as disposal of the hazardous waste and contaminated parts, are many. (Four years of decommissioning will produce more waste than has been churned out by 30 years of power plant operations.) Although several plants have been shut down in recent years, no large plant has thus far been decommissioned. But by the year 2010, dozens of plants will be eligible.

The NRC has already passed a rule saying no public hearing for how and when each plant should be buried is required. In fact, one "generic hearing" for *all* plants was held in 1988, a time when decommissioning was safely off the public's radar. (Public interest was so sparse that just 40 letters were received by the NRC on the rule, only one of which was from an environmental group.) The result: Specific decisions on the decommissioning of each plant will be made by the NRC and utilities when each plant is retired. "The NRC is acting ahead of time, and that's good," explains Martin Pasqualetti, a decommissioning expert at the University of Arizona who has advised the NRC. "But when it comes time to decommission, the public's going to stand there befuddled, saying, 'no one included us.' "

Fission chips

That the industry would push for such regulations is to be expected. But what about the NRC? After all, it's chartered to safeguard the public's interest. And it admits that it needs help: It acknowledges that it can effectively evaluate only 1 percent of a reactor's construction. In fact, the commission has clearly stated that public intervention is a useful tool. "Interveners have made an important impact on safety," reported a 1980 NRC report, "sometimes as a catalyst in the pre-hearing stage . . . sometimes by forcing more thorough review of an issue than a reluctant agency."

So why the eagerness to toe the industry line? One reason is ideological: the deregulatory agenda of the past two administrations. The second reason is a pragmatic one: No government agency is of a mind to regulate itself out of a job, and with the industry unwilling to build new plants unless the rules are changed, the NRC faces the choice of giving in or watching commercial nuclear power—and the agency—wither away.

Hence the industry's cozy relationship with the NRC, of which examples abound. Thermo-lag, a fireproofing material, lines cables in nearly two thirds of all U.S. power plants. But after a decade of independent testing revealed that Thermo-lag provides far from adequate fire protection, the NRC requested that plants fitted with the material test and replace it if found faulty. Before sending out letters, however, the NRC ran the idea by NUMARC, the industry's main lobbying arm. NUMARC, of course, bristled at the notion of requiring either replacement or testing, labeling them unnecessary precautions and requesting that the NRC hold off. The agency obliged.

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Industry lobbyists don't have to push too hard to get the NRC to see things from their perspective. Most of the commissioners are children of the industry: Four of the five current commissioners worked at one time in the nuclear power business or were officers in the nuclear Navy. "The NRC is an inbred club of nuclear people trained in the nuclear world," says Herbert Brown, a former NRC official who now works as a Capitol Hill aide in an unrelated area. "They act as though their sole purpose is to explain why interveners are wrong."

Although the NRC's current commissioner, Ivan Selin, who just completed his first year at the helm of the agency, has listed regaining public trust as one of his top priorities, he's yet to back his statements with concrete proposals. Still, simply stating that the agency will be more public-responsive is a step in the right direction, especially compared to the views of the last few chairmen. (Selin's immediate predecessor, Kenneth Carr, once stated that the public could trust nuclear power because plant operators are patriotic Americans.) But unless the NRC is actually ready to stand up to the industry, we'll have to get used to a future in which the public will have little say in how and where its most dangerous energy source will be used.

What's needed is a compromise that will restore the public voice in each of the newly regulated areas without handling the Birkenstock crowd the keys to the plant. In the licensing process, for example, provisions to allow evidence brought in by whistleblowers should be restored, given the fact that unfounded claims can be quickly screened out by licensing boards and legitimate ones may have already saved us from a genuine meltdown. Those whistleblower provisions should also be made mandatory in decommissioning hearings.

In license renewal, the NRC should require that unless plants nearing the end of their licenses are remodeled to comply with new safety standards, they should be phased out. After all, when the utilities built the plants decades ago, they built them with 40-year lifespans in mind. It's only fair to make the industry live up to its own standards.

Re-opening the process would allow those most affected by the perils and advantages of nuclear energy—citizens—the chance to take a close and careful look. And it doesn't necessarily mean killing off the industry. For if the utilities and the NRC want to ensure the survival of nuclear energy, the first and most important step is to recoup the public trust. To that end, it's hard to imagine a more ill-conceived tactic than attempting to strongarm the public into acceptance instead of winning it over by allowing it a greater say. □

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TIDBITS & OUTRAGES

"YOUR HONOR, I CAN ASSURE YOU MY CLIENT HAS ALREADY SUFFERED ENOUGH, ESPECIALLY SINCE THURSDAY."
In response to Justice Department charges that General Electric defrauded the U.S. of at least $30 million by bribing a general in Israel to help sell jet engines there, the Pentagon barred GE from initiating or renewing engine contracts for five days.

GOD, THAT WOULD HAVE TEMPTED US
When Ross Perot appeared on "Larry King Live" the night after announcing that he would not run for president, Cher called in and told Perot, "I'm willing to give up everything I'm doing" if he would re-enter the race.

ORDER NOW AND GET A STAR WARS TANNING RAY ABSOLUTELY FREE
The TWA in-flight magazine *Ambassador Club* recently advertised "The Stealth Gym Flexerciser," a home fitness device "constructed of the same high-tech, stronger-than-steel fiber as the Stealth Bomber."

READ OUR LIPS: NO NEW EXCUSES
In an appearance on CBS' "This Morning" program, George Bush stated that he broke his "no new taxes" vow because he didn't want to get into a standoff with Congress over taxes while he was trying to keep funding going for the military effort against Saddam Hussein. Bush broke the vow on June 26, 1990—more than a month before Iraq invaded Kuwait.

HE'S ALSO SUING BUDWEISER FOR MAKING EASY-OPENING TWIST-OFF CAPS
Former jockey Willie Shoemaker, paralyzed in a single-car accident he had while driving drunk, has sued the state of California for negligence because there were no rubber guardrails where the crash occurred.

IT'S A GOOD THING THEY DIDN'T WAIT A WEEK
In St. Louis, Missouri, the United States Postal Service purchased a building for $12 million from a developer who had bought the building earlier the same day for $4 million.

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Universal Soldier

What Paula Coughlin can teach American women.

by Katherine Boo

Deep in the 2,200 pages of Naval Investigative Service transcripts about the infamous Tailhook weekend, a moment of humanity interrupts a catalog of outrage and indifference. A man sees a distraught woman flee onto a hotel balcony, her clothes stretched and torn and three naval aviators fast behind her. As the men laugh and taunt, the Samaritan intervenes. Ordering the offenders to leave her alone, he ferries her out of the melee and into safety.

Unfortunately, our hero isn't a serviceman. He's a bartender. And that woozy night, it seemed as if you had to live outside military culture to recognize that attacking women isn't just boys being boys. Fortunately, however, the past few months have been a long, harsh-lit morning for the American military, as the official Lessons of Tailhook swim into focus. We've had lessons about outlaw aviator culture, about convoluted chains of command, about widespread service alcoholism, about women's place on the front lines—military lessons, all. Yet the timeliest lesson may speak, not to the guys in uniform, but to that anonymous woman who was chased around the Hilton—and to every other woman in America. It's the lesson embodied by 30-year-old Naval Lieutenant Paula Coughlin, a pilot mauled by her peers that weekend, who came forward at considerable professional risk to demand that the Navy bring her attackers to justice.

Her superiors ignored her; other victims deserted her; even the mini-skirt she wore that evening was held up to the light. In the usual doomed-whistleblower scenario, Coughlin would today be selling discount fatigues at Sunny's Surplus, cursing the day she spoke out against the Navy. There'd be a drink named after her—a sour one—at some Miramar aviators' bar. But a year after the raucous convention that ushered Tailhook into the civilian lexicon, this isn't shaping up like the usual story.

Katherine Boo is an editor of The Washington Monthly. *Research assistance was provided by Emily Nelson.*

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In fact, there's a chance that Paula Coughlin's courage will actually change a culture many feminists had long given up as lost.

So why should female civvies care? Because a few weeks after Paula Coughlin was attacked, she and the rest of America heard lawyer Anita Hill explain her decision not to protest Clarence Thomas's repeated sexual harassment over the years in which she worked for him: "I was aware," she said, "that telling at any point in my career could adversely affect my future career." It was a justification that provoked instant empathy from working women.

"I think that is something that a woman in that situation would do," asserted Hill's friend Ellen Wells at the hearings, a speculation that had women nodding in agreement across the nation. "You think, yes, perhaps this job is secure, but maybe they will post me in an office in a corner with a telephone and *The Washington Post* to read from nine to five, and that won't get me anywhere. So you are quiet and you are ashamed and you sit there and take it."

A decade after Hill sat there and took it, and a year after she sat there and told it, her choice of silence has been so energetically defended it now seems to rank among the unassailable feminine prerogatives. She personally is enough of an icon that campaign literature from Senate hopeful Carol Moseley Braun gives the Oklahoma law professor as much space as the candidate. Yet it is precisely for those who argue that Anita Hill had no other choice that Paula Coughlin's story is a countermyth of crucial importance, one that cries to be rescued from the brig of military lore. It says that a woman *can* fight against injustice in a closed, hierarchical, defensive culture. And, hell, she can even prevail—not just for herself, as Anita Hill did in silence, but for hundreds of thousands of other women.

Babes in boyland

The comparison between the two women is, of course, a ragged one. There's vast difference between privately tendered sexual innuendo and a populous hallway brawl. And Paula Coughlin wasn't victimized (at least at first) by her boss. Yet to fully appreciate her guts, it's worth rewinding, via the Navy transcripts, to the Tailhook weekend and the months that followed. That, mind you, was well before the beer-swilling, crotch-groping, criminal-making aviators' party had made its way into the major press; before Navy leaders had their mouths frozen into outraged 'O's. Rather, it was back when the odds of Paula Coughlin's prevailing looked slim next to the odds of being ignored, marginalized, or even demoted—in other words, about as grim as young Anita Hill's.

While you'd have to strain to find a "good" arena for a professional woman to fight sexual harassment (although Hill's Equal Employment Opportunity Commission should've come close), the military may have been the consummate hard-luck setting—a truth founded on much more than a few rowdy weekends. Thus the likelihood of obtaining professional equality with male peers probably already seemed a long shot to Coughlin, an aide to Rear Admiral Jack Snyder at Maryland's Patuxent River Naval Air Test Center. Yet, like Anita Hill, Coughlin was no bristling, broadcasting feminist. For eight years she adhered to the bootstrap philosophy of equal rights: By making it yourself, you do a service to womanhood in general. "I had worked my ass off trying to be one of the guys," Coughlin noted later, "to be the best naval officer I can and prove women can do whatever the job calls for."

But after she wandered into a Las Vegas Hilton hallway that Tailhook weekend and faced the Navy tradition known as the "gantlet," the bootstrap stuff must have seemed a little flimsy. Suddenly a chant of "admiral's aide, admiral's aide" rose up and several dozen of her service *peers* engulfed her, mauling her, pushing her to the ground, and attempting to take her clothes off. As Coughlin yelled for help, they laughed, abandoning her only to treat more women walking down the hall to the same giddy molestation—attacks meant, as one Whidby Island, Washington, airman later noted, "in a good-natured, lighthearted way."

Coughlin wasn't the only officer who had personally learned the difference between good nature and hostile groping that night, but in the beginning she might as well have been. Although two civilian women filed official complaints about their treatment at Tailhook, the assaulted servicewomen, fearing professional reprisal, adhered firmly to the Anita Hill School of Silence. One female officer, who had earned a certain fame among Tailhook attendees for having decked one of the men who attacked her, cried for days after the incident. But when another officer encouraged her to file charges, she decided to just "let it go." "In the beginning I thought about reporting it," she told Navy officials later, "but I thought that there was nothing anyone could probably do about it anyway. . . ."

Recall that, like Anita Hill, these were women of considerable accomplishment and leverage—in this case, naval officers. They had a lot more credibility than the drunk teenage girl who that night had been stripped of her clothing, manhandled by dozens of aviators and left exposed and confused in a Hilton hallway. They had more power than the hundreds of enlisted women raped and otherwise abased annually in the service. Yet, as they repeatedly indicated to

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naval investigators, they also had a lot more to lose. Thus, at about the same time that Hill was explaining her eight years of silent suffering, Tailhook assault victims found themselves following her example.

Fear of professional reprisal is no idle worry, and post-Hill surveys have shown it's still a primary concern of victimized women. Yet it's critical that feminists count in the social cost of keeping quiet—a cost that the Tailhook victims had cause to understand firsthand. As male servicemen repeatedly noted to investigators, the gantlet, and the assaults it implied, had been going on at least since 1986; it was, as one put it, "an honored tradition." And as many aviators also pointed out, this Tailhook gathering was a heck of a lot less raucous than the previous year's. But while civilian women had occasionally protested their treatment, women officers—the ones with real love for, and leverage in, the Navy—had seldom joined them. The gantlet continued. And the women at Tailhook '91 became victims, not just of drunken aviators, but of all the women before them who had made the same choice of silence.

Full-metal jackals

With a wider lens, it's hard to deny that knowledge of wrongdoing should carry with it some obligation: to do what you can to stop the drug company executive who suppresses negative evidence from laboratory studies, to keep the head of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission from breaking the rules he's been entrusted to implement, to turn a time-honored atrocity into an obsolete one. Hill seemed to concentrate primarily on personal preservation—what George Bernard Shaw called the Gospel of Getting On. Coughlin, on the other hand, seemed to get the big picture. "This was not the Navy officer image I grew up with, that I worked with," she later said. So she tried to change that image.

Still, as anyone who's been there knows, there's a yawning chasm between believing that something should be changed and actually making it happen. When Coughlin reported her story to her superiors, she found herself in another gantlet—a kind of *Let's Go* guide to institutional sexism. Her boss' response on the morning after the attack was, "That's what you get when you go to a hotel party with a bunch of drunk aviators." In the following weeks, she was told to get counseling, warned of the enormous professional folly of her actions (she could or be "blackballed by the aviation community," a superior informed her), made fun of, and just plain ignored. The detailed complaint she wrote languished in the hands of her boss. And while dozens of aviators had wit-

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nessed the '91 gantlet, they circled their wagons so tightly that Clarence Thomas's fawning secretaries look like turncoats by comparison.

X refused to participate in any "witch hunt for admirals and had no further information concerning this investigation." Y "may have attended Tailhook '91 but he is not sure. Could not provide any additional information. . . ." Z defended a suspect by noting, "[Accused] was a very handsome person and . . . women were attracted to him." A male officer-acquaintance who had consoled Coughlin immediately after the attack felt compelled to note, when interviewed by the Naval Intelligence Service (NIS), that the skirt she had been wearing was rather short. And even the NIS agent assigned to help her identify her attackers came on to her, at one point calling her "Sweet Cakes."

This is the stuff of Anita Hill's worst nightmares circa 1983—and it was a collective acceptance of their plausibility that caused women to embrace her eight years later. And why not accept it? It takes true doggedness to force an organization to live up to its ideals, and the media are full of stories in which the innocent lose when they fight. Those stories surely crossed Coughlin's mind as the Navy dawdled after her attackers. In the months following the attack, she sobbed like a child and ate like a logger. What she didn't do, however, was shut up. Instead, in June she decided to go public.

To the average woman discriminated against at work, "going public" means getting a lawyer, turning to an advocacy group, perhaps talking to the local paper. For Coughlin, who happened to be sitting on a major story, it meant essentially telling the world. Still, in interviews with "World News Tonight" and *The Washington Post*, Coughlin criticized the Navy bluntly and allowed her name to be used. And if that seemed to her female colleagues like career suicide, it ended up being the savviest move, on feminist *and* professional grounds, that she could have made. Amid the Navy transcripts is the testimony of another woman officer abused at Tailhook. "I didn't think about reporting this to anyone," she stated, until she read an article about Coughlin, whom she had previously met and respected. "Then I felt it was my duty to come to the defense of the lieutenant who initially reported the incident." More and more officers joined her, until a dozen had disgorged their stories. The Navy now had on its hands something too noisome to ignore.

By summer, the chief of naval operations, Admiral Frank Kelso, found himself publicly vouching for Coughlin's career on national TV. The folks who ignored Tailhook, on the other hand, weren't nearly so well protected. Two days after Coughlin went to the media, Navy Secretary Lawrence Garrett, who himself had attended Tailhook (he was hanging out on the patio outside a suite where strippers and prostitutes were working), was forced to resign. And thanks to enormous public pressure to ensure that this time around the charges are thoroughly investigated, there may be more U.S. military casualties by the end of the Tailhook affair than there were in the Persian Gulf.

That part of the story is kind of fun to watch. But the most important outcome of Coughlin's action is a subtler one. In 1989, when Admiral Virgil Hill dismissed as "highjinks" the chaining of a female Naval Academy student to a toilet, and the five midshipmen who had abused her were allowed to graduate, the semaphore was surely read by the ranks. This time around, as naval officers and enlistees take their new training on sexual harassment policies and hear rumors of another officer canned for looking the other way in a harassment case, the old message has gone the way of the B-1 bomber. Sure, the smarmy slogan now playing on billboards at bases across the country —"Not in Our Navy"—will probably never be true, but the Navy's commitment to making it so may be.

Of course, it is futile to try to predict the full repercussions of speaking out as Coughlin did. Who would have guessed, for instance, that Tailhook would revive the revanchist idea that women shouldn't be allowed in the military? And as for credit, don't count on it, even from those you help.

When Lt. Commander Roxanne Barrett, one of the highest-ranking women harassed at Tailhook, was asked recently on a D.C. radio station whether Coughlin's coming forward had prompted her to tell her story, she emphatically demurred. She had thought it better for her career to stay silent, Barrett said, until the Naval Intelligence Service came banging on the door. "I thought *that* was the right time," she added primly—ignoring the fact that, without Coughlin's willingness to take the risk that Barrett herself opted out of, that time would never have come.

In other words, it was because *one* woman stood up and spoke out that a misogynist culture is now forced to reconsider its ways. So why hasn't *People* magazine called? Perhaps it's because we like stories of damsels in distress better than stories of women triumphant. Or maybe the lieutenant simply didn't do enough TV. Nevertheless, we shouldn't allow the lesson to float away. Anita Hill's message to American women was that it's okay to choose our own professional advancement over loftier social goals. Paula Coughlin reminds us that, if we sweat for it, we may sometimes have it both ways. □

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Lab Rats

What to do about science fraud? The first step is admitting the evidence

by Natalie Angier

One of the few pleasures that followed the sustained gangbang of the American economy in the eighties by a club of smug Wall Street stock boys was seeing some of those white-collar rapists end up in prison. Oh, sweet justice, that even powerful and once-romanticized high financiers could be made to pay for their crimes and at last be seen as the oily swindlers they are.

Quite another reaction follows the uncloaking of a fraudulent scientist. Here, there can be no glee, no triumph, no sense of gotcha! Instead, the idea of researchers breaching our fundamental trust is frankly revolting. Scientists are supposed to be the closest thing to secular divinity, our wise divulgers of nature's mysteries. They have no other purpose but to tell the truth. So when they are caught marking the backs of mice with black ink and calling the splotches skin grafts or smoothing out a doubtful graph with a few fabricated data points, what else can one feel but profound disgust? And the fact that ever more cases of scientific fraud are coming to light only heightens the impression that nothing is sacred, everybody is corrupt, and that hell isn't large enough to hold all the sinners.

Given the emotions that surround the issue of fraud in science, *Stealing into Print** is surprisingly cool, cerebral, and, on occasion, dry. It is nevertheless an important work, for it explores in scholarly detail how new discoveries are disseminated, how the exalted peer review system really works, and how difficult it is to stop fraud from permanently sullying the historical record once it has been published. Marcel LaFollette, a professor of science and technology policy at Washington University in St. Louis, is not interested in merely recounting the most harrowing fraud stories, nor does she

Natalie Angier is a science reporter for The New York Times.

**Stealing into Print: Fraud, Plagiarism, and Misconduct in Scientific Publishing.* Marcel C. LaFollette. *University of California Press, $30.*

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try to address every aspect of scientific chicanery. For example, she makes no attempt to explain who is likely to cheat or why.

Instead, LaFollette takes an astringent look at one piece of the intricate business of fraud: how fraudulent papers get published and what can be done to remedy, or at least lessen, the incidence of printed fraud. By considering the process of scientific publication, she opens up wider questions of responsibility and accountability. In particular, she questions whether scientists are capable of policing their own ranks. "What does the discovery of unethical conduct say about current systems for evaluating and disseminating research-based knowledge?" she asks. "And how may those systems be changed by efforts to detect, investigate, mitigate, and prevent wrongdoing?" We may be unable to count on scientists to keep their house clean, she claims, because most of them refuse to see the dirt for what it is. "[The] discovery of unethical or illegal conduct contradicts scientists' self-images, their beliefs about how 'real' scientists act," she writes. "As a consequence, the community often engages in wholesale denial of the problem's significance." Indeed, until quite recently, scientists have treated with hostility anybody who even mentioned the word fraud, viewing the issue as a creature of media hype—blown out of proportion to titillate a public that otherwise finds science dull—which sells newspapers and feeds a growing strain of anti-intellectualism.

The author finds fault with nearly everybody in and around the scientific arena. She is critical of scientists who lobby to get their names on a paper but who cry ignorance or innocence when one of their coauthors turns out to be a fraud. She lambastes the editors of scientific journals who sit passively on the sidelines while others fight over whether a paper that appeared in their publication is genuine or a hoax. She complains that most science reporters, far from being the "hyperactive pit bulls" most scientists believe, are in fact timid invertebrates who rarely pursue evidence of potential infractions. And while she generally applauds whistleblowers for having the courage to defy their colleagues and expose malfeasance, she worries that, in their zeal to stamp out fraud, the watchdogs may trample the rights of the unfairly accused. The way to combat fraud, she says, is to formalize our handling of it, admit with some detachment that a certain percentage of scientists is likely to cheat, and design a systematic method for investigating claims and punishing proven perpetrators.

Cell block

LaFollette, alas, has not managed to discover what so many of us would like to know: exactly how many scientists commit fraud. But she doubts that dishonesty is as rare as most scientists believe; Daniel E. Koshland Jr., editor of the journal *Science*, recently declared that "scientists are ethically 99.9999 percent pure," although he offered no evidence to support his sweeping contention. LaFollette does not, however, unequivocally side with those cynics who believe that fraud is epidemic. Whether it is about to become so is another matter. She proposes that there is a greater commercial incentive for researchers to cheat today than 25 years ago. "Scientific knowledge is a major new commodity," she writes. She also suggests that the widespread use of technology such as computer networks, which can spread information swiftly and without any cross check, makes cheating easier than ever.

One of the book's most compelling chapters details the different types of possible research and publication fraud, a sort of guided tour of skulduggery. Scientists may out-and-out fabricate an experiment, as William Summerlin did at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Hospital in New York when he decorated those mice with a felt-tip pen to make it seem that their skin grafts had taken. Or scientists may refer in print to data that don't exist—what Thereza Imanishi-Kari

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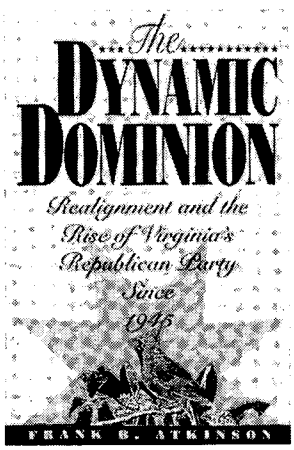
is said to have done in the widely publicized case of fraud that resulted in the resignation last year of her famous collaborator, David Baltimore, from his post as president of Rockefeller University. Scientists may seriously misrepresent authentic data, manipulating and massaging the results until everything fits perfectly into a preordained hypothesis. They may steal or plagiarize others' ideas, materials, and writings; put somebody's name on a paper without that person having contributed to the work; or claim credit for discovering something that others have found before.

We may be unable to count on scientists to keep their house clean because most of them refuse to see the dirt for what it is.

Nor is deceit limited to the authors of a paper. Those who handle a manuscript after its submission to a journal also have the opportunity to breach the trust others have placed in them. LaFollette goes into some depth in describing the peer review system that is supposed to help keep research clean. Upon receiving a scientific manuscript, a journal editor normally sends it out to two or three researchers who work in a similar field for their comments and criticisms. On occasion, a reviewer may be a direct competitor of the paper's authors, and there have been cases in which reviewers appear to have stolen data from a submitted manuscript to expedite their own experiments.

By and large, however, LaFollette praises reviewers for their diligence and commitment. Sometimes they may spot cases of apparent fraud simply in the normal course of checking over the submitted figures to see if they all make sense. I know of one case in which a Columbia University researcher who was reviewing a paper that had been submitted to the journal, *Cell*, calculated that if the author had done what he claimed to have done, he would have required as many laboratory petri dishes for one brief experiment



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as an entire scientific team would use in 10 years. The paper in question was never published, and the accused scientist was thrown out of his lab.

But LaFollette doubts that peer review on its own can do much to uncover fraud. The best way to detect chicanery is to repeat the experiment, which no reviewer has the luxury or inclination to do. Furthermore, scientists' definitions of what it means to review a manuscript vary. Some may scan for gross violations of logic, while others may recalculate some or all data tables.

Another enormous problem in rooting out fakery is distinguishing between fraud and an honest mistake. In rare instances, evidence of wrongdoing may be unequivocal. That happened recently at the National Institutes of Health, when Mitchell Rosner, a young graduate student, reported in *Cell* that he had done critical controls for experiments designed to explore the molecular details of embryonic development. But when others subsequently questioned the experiments and performed several checks on Rosner's work, proof that he had faked the controls was so overwhelming that Rosner had no choice but to sign a confession. The paper was speedily retracted in the bluntest possible language.

More often, the question of fraud is far murkier, and accusations and counteraccusations may fly for years. The most publicized example of this frustrating ambiguity is the aforementioned case of Thereza Imanishi-Kari and her disputed paper on the subject of immunology that also appeared in *Cell*. When her student, Margot O'Toole, had difficulty reproducing the results, she took her qualms to authorities at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where they both worked. Although David Baltimore, the senior author on the paper, dismissed Dr. O'Toole as a "disgruntled post-doc," rumors of a possible misdeed would not disappear. Eventually, the case was investigated by a congressional committee, before which Imanishi-Kari claimed that she had done everything that had been published, while O'Toole insisted that Imanishi-Kari's laboratory notebooks did not jibe with the published data. Baltimore thundered against political busybodying in the basilica of science and declared that Imanishi-Kari was merely a bit slapdash in her bookkeeping. Eventually, the Secret Service got involved. By forensically analyzing the paper Imanishi-Kari had used for counting radiation signals, the agents concluded fraud had occurred. Devastated and seemingly humbled, Baltimore retracted the paper.

The story still isn't over. Imanishi-Kari continues to claim her innocence and as of late July had reportedly hired her own forensic team to reanalyze the Secret Service's analysis of her data. That follow-up research, she said, trashed the initial forensic work. Baltimore, ever reluctant to admit to any error in judgment, told *The New York Times* that he was planning to retract his retraction. He argued that in light of the new forensic examination, the entire paper must be considered valid once again. Many of his colleagues fiercely disagreed, saying that nobody has been able to reproduce the results of the *Cell* paper and that Baltimore would be worse than foolish to cancel the retraction before repeating the entire experiment. As it looks now, Imanishi-Kari's guilt or innocence may never be known.

Salient solutions

Given the difficulty of proving fraud, how can its incidence be reduced? LaFollette does not pretend to have a tidy formula, but she believes that a good place to start is in accreditation—deciding whose names go on papers submitted for publication. Too often, researchers are listed as authors when they have done nothing more than provide advice over the telephone. They know little about the most important steps of the experiment and therefore cannot be depended on to detect suspicious results. They want all the benefits of another item for their resumes, but

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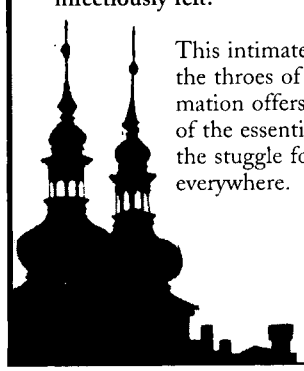

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none of the responsibility for assuring that the entire paper is accurate. LaFollette suggests that every name listed on a publication should be held accountable for every part of the work; only when such considerable obligations are met, she argues, will science truly be able to serve as its own sentry. If nothing else, that policy would cut down on the list of 10, 20, even 100 names that now clutter the top of the bigger scientific reports.

Stealing Into Print is by no means a completely satisfying book. For instance, LaFollette relies too heavily on examples taken from nonscientific disciplines like history and art to make her points. If scientists are going to argue that science is more pristine than nearly every other trade, the skeptic's best ammunition is a blizzard of specific evidence to the contrary. LaFollette also quotes extensively from novels about scientists, as though the way a fictional character in a Dorothy Sayers mystery responds to fraud is how it actually happens. This is a particularly puzzling approach, because LaFollette has taken such pains not to indulge us with the psychodramas and operatics of genuine scientific frauds.

Still, for anybody who cares about the meaning and texture of science and who wants to see it soar once again above the current miasma of publicized fraud, *Stealing into Print* helps illuminate the darkness. □

Bootlick for Bonzo

What Ed Meese's morning-in-America memoir won't tell you.

by David Corn

I never thought I would be nostalgic for Edwin Meese III, but the attorneys general succeeding him have lacked both his bumbling flair and symbolic poses. Who in the Bush years could inspire so memorable a slogan as "Meese Is a Pig"? (Remember the messenger whom security guards barred from entering the Justice Department because his T-shirt was emblazoned with that catchy statement?) Vice-President Dan Quayle comes close to filling this role, but until he gains real power, it's tough to take him seriously. Meese, on the other hand, was the nation's top law enforcement officer. And no cabinet member since has so embodied the administration he served.

After the curtain fell on the Reagan era, Meese high-tailed it to a post at the Heritage Foundation and snagged a contract from a major New York publisher to write about his Reagan days. But when he refused to kiss and tell, the house quite wisely lost interest. Meese took his business to conservative publisher Regnery Gateway, and the result is *With Reagan: The Inside Story.**

Meese is slavishly devoted to Ronald Reagan. According to the author, Reagan singlehandedly ushered in a golden age for America and the world. Through force of will and firm adherence to his conservative ideology, Meese's boss engineered a historic economic boom and the end of communism. And what's more, Reagan came on the scene just in the nick of time, because, as Meese sees it, America in 1980 was teetering on a precipice. Its "citizens, allies, and security interests seemed everywhere in danger," and the economy was just a step or two shy of doom.

In addition to portraying Reagan as America's savior, Meese's main task is to prove that Reagan was in control—that he was not an out-of-touch figurehead vulnerable to manipulation. Reagan was, Meese obsessively insists, a strong leader who knew his own mind.

I am prepared to accept that Reagan was in charge —even though he needed scripts for his photo ops with Girl Scouts. Meese obviously believes that an in-control Reagan deserves nothing but laurels for all that occurred during his administration. What of the errors and failures? Conveniently, Meese cannot recall many, and when he does, he is quick to assign culpability to those who would not let Reagan be Reagan. In other words, Reagan the decisive leader was not fully responsible when mistakes were made.

Reagan's biggest domestic achievement, Meese argues, was cutting taxes his first year in office. He has little to say about the deficits that Reagan be-

David Corn is the Washington editor of The Nation.

**With Reagan: The Inside Story.* Edwin Meese III. *Regnery Gateway, $24.95.*

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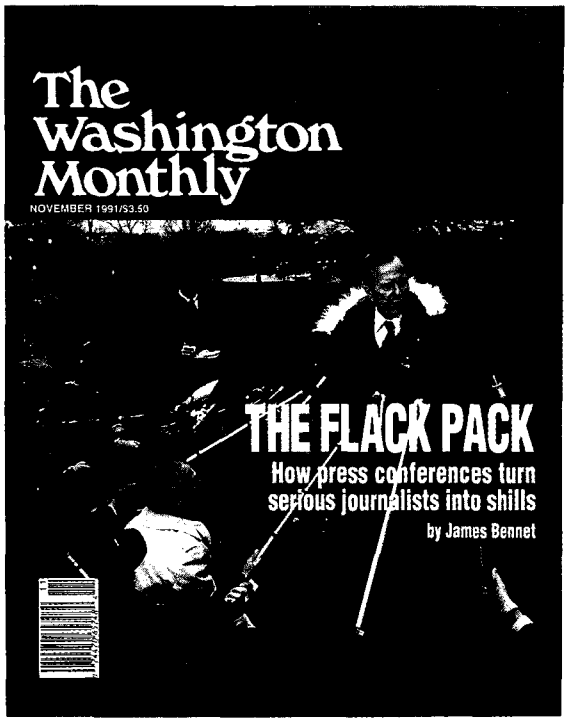

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queathed to America—except to note that the Democratic dunderheads in Congress did not cut spending enough. Reaganomics, in Meese's view, heralded the "longest peacetime economic expansion in the history of our nation"—a mantra he chants repeatedly. He marshals a host of often dubious statistics to prove that Reagan revived a sagging economy. My favorite statistical sleight-of-hand is his reliance on a chart that tracks disposable personal income. The table shows a 20 percent rise (in real terms) between 1981 and 1989. But the chart covers disposable income *per capita*, and not everyone makes the per capita amount. The latest census figures indicate that the percentage of the population with a middle-class income has declined. In 1979, 31 percent of American households had an income of $25,000 a year or less. In 1989, it was 42 percent.

One can engage in a statistical duel with Meese. For instance, who benefited most from Reaganomics? Between 1979 and 1990, the percentage of full-time workers whose incomes remained below the poverty line climbed from 12 to 18 percent, while the average salaries of millionaires rose 49.5 percent. But Meese barely addresses major changes that occurred while Reagan ran the nation: the increase in the trade deficit; the decline of inner-city economic life; the demise of heavy, high-wage industries; and the explosion in speculative, parasitical business activity. If Reagan was in charge, let's at least grant him partial credit for all of this.

But in *With Reagan*, it still is morning in America. There has been no S&L debacle and no HUD scandal. There is literally nothing Meese cannot justify. Spending billions on such white elephants as the B-1 and B-2 bombers weighs not an ounce on his conscience. He claims the Reagan-era military build-up not only brought the Soviets to their knees, but delivered the victory in Grenada and the 1986 raid against Qaddafi. He also disingenuously attributes the United States' success in the Gulf war to the Reagan defense budget, but he forgets to discuss the Reagan administration's attempt to cozy up to Saddam Hussein. As for Reagan's 1983 blunder in Lebanon, which ended with 241 Marines killed by a suicide bomber, Meese touches on this tragedy only long enough to pin the blame for the deaths on the State Department, not on the decisive commander-in-chief. Meese deems Reagan's resolve to invade Grenada right after the Lebanon bombing "remarkable." What is truly remarkable is that the Grenada action got Reagan off the hook for the Lebanon massacre.

Meese's observations about fellow Reaganauts are thin. Jeane Kirkpatrick, former ambassador to the United Nations, "spoke eloquently and forcefully in behalf of the rule of law." What of her efforts to court the torturing generals of Argentina? James Watt, the secretary of the interior with a taste for his own foot, is a "brilliant lawyer." When he notes Watt's resignation, Meese does not refer to the controversy that precipitated it. Oddly, there is scant mention of George Bush, and Meese has nothing to say about Nancy Reagan.

Meese clearly carries a grudge against the enemies within, the so-called pragmatists who encouraged Reagan to adjust to the established way of doing things in Washington. It was those damned pragmatists—Richard Darman, Michael Deaver, David Stockman, and James Baker—who persuaded Reagan to pave the way for a tax increase in 1982 to counter the deficit-causing tax cut of 1981. This "Debacle of 1982," Meese writes, was "the greatest mistake we made during the Reagan administration." But in telling the story of that betrayal, Meese unintentionally undermines his own portrait of Reagan. Darman and Deaver, he claims, blocked administration officials who opposed a tax hike from access to the Oval Office. They even went so far as to prevent Reagan from seeing copies of his favorite magazine, the archconservative *Human Events*. This is hardly a flattering account. In fact, it is frightening to think that White House decisions could have turned on

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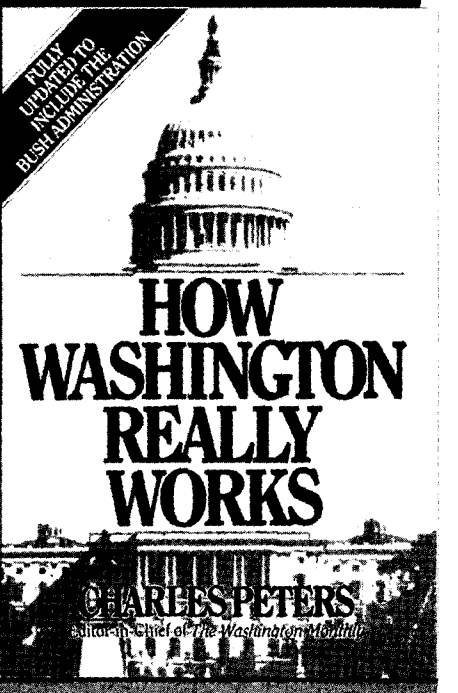

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[illegible] from the boss. But, ever the acolyte, Meese uses this episode to show that the fault lay with the aides, not the star.

He assails Secretary of State George Shultz for, among other things, not supporting aid to Jonas Savimbi and his anticommunist Angolan rebels. (Recent evidence has shed light on Savimbi's brutality.) But James Baker suffers the worst of Meese's sting. In recounting a Baker-Deaver plan in which Baker would become national security adviser, Meese notes that at a meeting with Reagan, CIA Director William Casey vividly expressed his opposition to it. "Mr. President," Casey supposedly exclaimed, "you can't have the biggest leaker in Washington as your national security adviser."

Mince Meese

Meese states early on that this is not a personal memoir. Because he does not write about his travails with independent counsel James McKay, who investigated allegations of misdeeds by Meese, it might not be fair to cover that ground in this review. But why be fair? After all, it was Meese who once said of criminal defendants, "You don't have many suspects who are innocent. That's contradictory." Moreover, in listing the ills of Washington, Meese rails against "consultants, lawyers, public relations people, and others" who make a living off the federal government. Yet Meese certainly did his bit for a certain pal who tried to suck money from the teat of government.

When E. Robert Wallach, a close friend and law school classmate, asked Meese to use his influence to help a private company (which later became Wedtech) obtain a federal contract, Meese, then counselor to the president, put one of his deputies on the case. At one point, Meese himself telephoned Secretary of Commerce Malcolm Baldridge about the firm's application. For helping the company (by using his White House contacts), Wallach eventually received compensation worth more than a million dollars. Later, around 1984, he provided Meese with free legal services when Meese's nomination for attorney general stalled due to allegations of financial impropriety. Independent counsel McKay found no evidence of criminal wrongdoing in the Meese-Wedtech business, but the investigation was hampered when four key witnesses, including Wallach, embraced the Fifth.

Meese kept McKay busy. The independent counsel also investigated the management of Meese's blind trust; a conflict-of-interest involving decisions Meese made about the break-up of AT&T (Meese held stock in a Baby Bell company); Meese's failure to report capital gains; an unusual arrangement in which his wife's salary at a charitable organization was donated by a friend of Wallach's, a developer who hoped to keep the Justice Department as a tenant; and Meese's assistance to Wallach in the latter's efforts to win U.S. support for the construction of an Iraqi-Jordanian oil pipeline. In the pipeline episode, Wallach informed Meese that Bruce Rappaport, a wealthy Swiss industrialist, intended to funnel pipeline profits to Israel's Labor party. After learning that an illegal bribery scheme might be afoot, Meese took no steps to terminate U.S. involvement in the pipeline project nor to notify any government authority.

Of Meese and mendacity

In *With Reagan*, Meese devotes much attention to the Iran-contra scandal, but what appears to concern him most is how history will record his involvement in it. After details about the Iran initiative—in which Reagan traded arms to Iran to pry loose the hostages and promote a strategic opening—began to emerge, Meese initiated his own probe into what had occurred. As he portrays it, his investigation was conducted merely to reconcile conflicting statements from administration officials and was responsible for unearthing evidence that Oliver North had diverted funds from the Iran weapons deal to the contras. What Meese leaves out could fill a chapter—and it does, in the report filed by the congressional Iran-contra committees.

As that report notes, Meese chose political appointees, not the FBI or the criminal division of Justice, to handle the investigation; delayed his confrontation with North; ignored Shultz's warning that the Iran initiative and the contra operation were linked; held important interviews alone; and failed to take notes during key interviews. In a supplement to the Iran-contra report, four Democratic members of the House Iran-contra committee (yes, a partisan lot, but they argue persuasively) concluded, "Because of the attorney general's failure to act promptly to preserve documents and to conduct thorough interviews —and in some instances, any interviews—of the major actors in these events, we may never know the answers to many of the key questions that have been raised by this affair."

Ultimately, this apologia offers little insight into Meese's hero and his presidency. But for those who long for the good old Reagan days (and you know who you are), Meese's book offers a chance to relive them. Problems of government ethics are overlooked, penny-ante military wins are transformed into glorious crusades, vital subjects are ignored—and all is well. □

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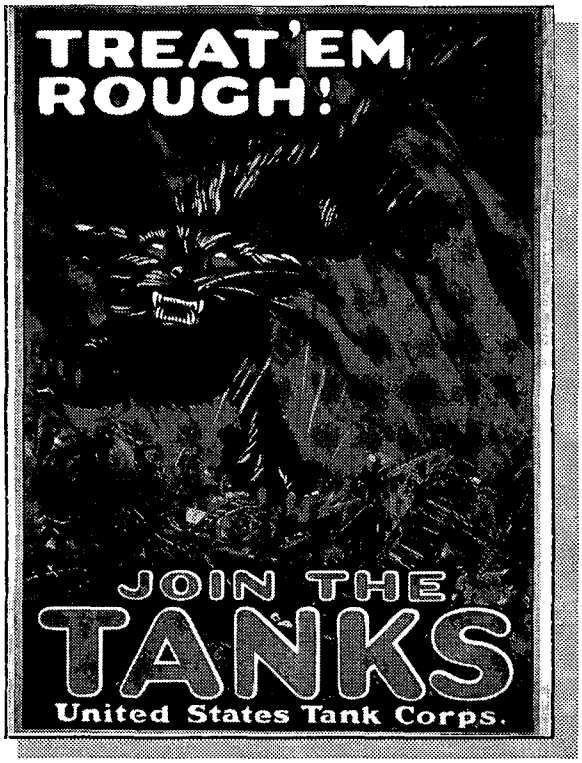

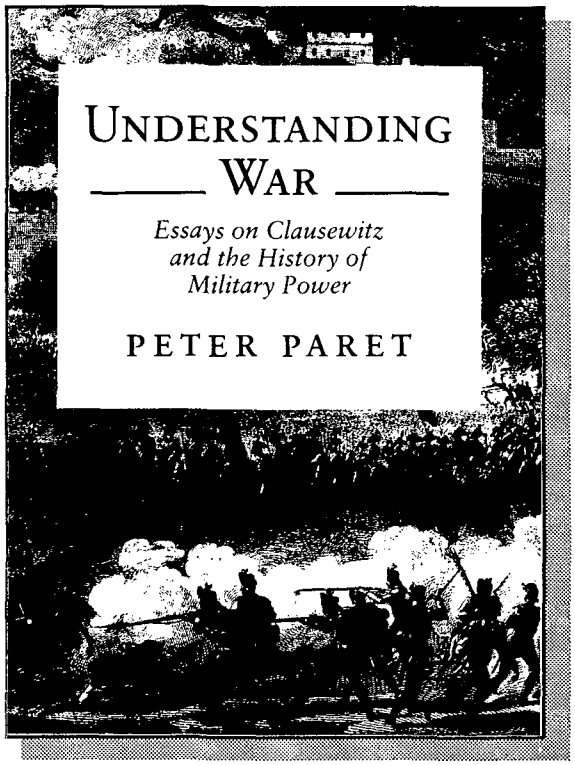

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POLITICAL PUZZLE

by John Barclay

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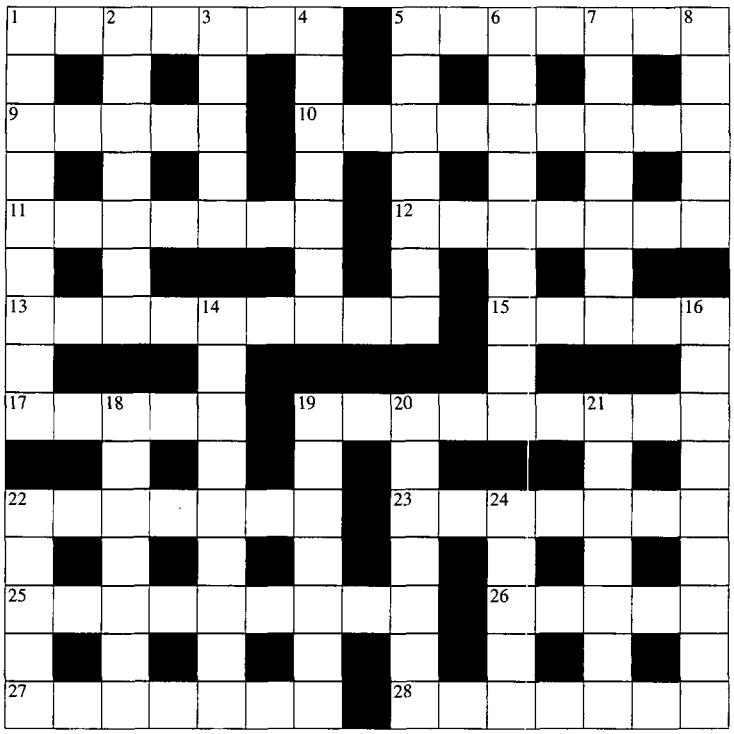


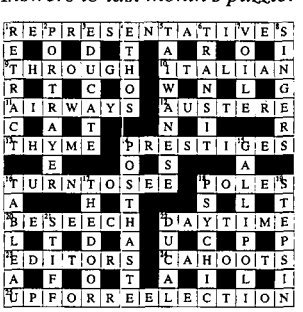
ACROSS

1. Candidate is study about piece of fluff. (7)
5. Key worn loosely in Cuomo territory. (3,4)
9. Stormy coast race site. (5)
10. Latest lie fabricated for dependent. (9)
11. Net heir realized after direction of sorts. (2, 5)
12. Warts do turn out in another direction. (7)
13. Raid tonic mixture for sign. (9)
15. Electronic device recalled about nut. (5)
17. Le Carré ending shook up Olympic contestant. (5)
19. Bring in again differently (3 vars.). (9)
22. Hen clan gathered for media slot. (7)
23. CEO plan devised for home's comparison. (2, 5)
25. Strange Cincy need is an affront to many. (9)
26. Series of adventures ends for 49 at Dulles. (5)
27. Blooming issue for 1 Across. (7)
28. Another issue for 1 Across—Mint Avenue Development. (7)

DOWN

1. Break frail ice before middle of April for spin doctor. (9)
2. Caused trouble when one Kennedy followed little company. (7)
3. King or queen, for example, let it unravel. (5)
4. Shaking canes in New Testament at early stage. (7)
5. Olympic contestant makes informal farewell back in Norway. (7)
6. Virginia figure surrounds rising marble for kayak site. (4, 5)
7. Letter from comic Ronald Reagan appointed. (7)
8. Collects jails? (5)
14. Newspaper adapted Ron cliche. (9)
16. European locale where mater trod randomly. (9)
18. Italian union component takes in praise. (7)
19. Eases up about fast times. (7)
20. Shakespeare figure—the one followed by rising nurse trailing potted ivy. (5, 2)
21. Toenail surgery produced delirium. (7)
22. Official organized branch, i.e., factory. (5)
24. Snoops around, we hear, for award. (5)

Answers to last month's puzzle:



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POLITICAL BOOKNOTES

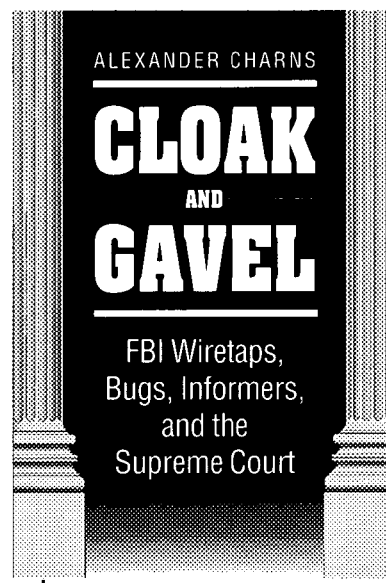
Imposters in the Temple. Martin Anderson. *Simon & Schuster, $22.* In one of the many tales of academic foolishness chronicled in this exasperated book, Martin Anderson rails about the praise showered by Stanford University leaders on a deceased scholar alleged to have molested the son of one of his students. Fuming at the spectacle of professors "covering up the black deeds of their colleague," Anderson quotes "the great 19th-century writer and critic" John Ruskin: "The essence of lying is in deception not in words; a lie may be told by silence, by equivocation . . . and all these kinds of lies are worse and baser by many degrees than a lie plainly worded." Ironically for Anderson and the moral high ground he wants to assume, Ruskin was one of the more notorious pedophiles of his time.

Nothing about the realm of the university, it seems, is as simple as Anderson would have it. His diatribe is supposedly aimed at the "intellectual elite"—well in advance of Dan Quayle's revival of Spiro Agnew's rhetoric—but it proposes a rather facile solution to academia's current woes. Unwilling (or unable) to offer a nuanced analysis of the problems he discerns, Anderson is left with the most unhelpful of explanations—it's all "their" fault—and reduced to recommending the most narcissistic of remedies: replication of himself. There should be fewer people overall in academia, but more people in it like Martin Anderson. Every institution should be more like the Hoover Institute; every economics treatise should be more like the ones he writes.

This is Huxley turned on his head, a sort of Brave Old World, where a few shining principles reign insulated from the challenge of dissident "newcomers"; where Straussian political scientists join with free-market economists and classics professors to keep the academy safe; where there will be no one like George Monroe, past chair of the Dartmouth board, to question *The Dartmouth Review*, which Anderson describes, thinly and misleadingly, as "a student newspaper." As everyone knows, the *Review* has a political agenda, which it does not hide.

Anderson, however, must ignore this agenda because, in the story he tells, agendas corrupt. "The governing boards of universities should adopt policies that strictly forbid political bias in either teaching or faculty hiring." The problem with this piety is that it would have to be administered, and those who administer it would have to decide what is and is not "political bias."

A program emphasizing Western values and traditions is no less political than its rivals, only differently political. The differences matter and are worth arguing about, but what will be at stake in the argument is the question of which political agenda is to prevail. Nevertheless, Anderson claims to be fighting politicization,



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which he says (quoting fellow traveler Harvey Mansfield) "comes from the Left." This is a claim, of course, that comes in a book that cites only right-wing authors, lauds only right-wing institutions, and promotes only right-wing ideas. Anderson has every right to be an ideologue, but he shouldn't be allowed to get away with disclaiming ideology at the very moment he is practicing it.

Imposters offers little by way of original research; Anderson's favorite mode of documentation is to report "What I have observed personally"; and when he does cite a source it is often some third-hand report of a story in *The Wall Street Journal*. He makes few points that have not been made by others. His book is less informative than *Illiberal Education*, less intellectually substantial than *Tenured Radicals*, and less mean-spirited—and therefore less fun—than *Profscam*. Its chief novelty is that it attacks the discipline of economics rather than literary studies, although Anderson does take a couple of potshots at deconstruction (with some of my own work getting caught in the crossfire).

But above all, *Imposters* is a paean to Anderson's memory of happier days, a repository of his cherished opinions, and an occasion for him to settle old scores, most of them with Stanford University.

Throughout, Anderson is so preoccupied with racking up points against the imagined conspiracy of the academic Left that he fritters away the opportunities opened up by his own investigations. In a chapter entitled "Children Teaching Children," Anderson mounts a persuasive critique of the use of teaching assistants at the majority of our campuses. To his credit, he goes beyond the usual complaint against turning over students to other students and details the effect of the practice on those who become its conscripted laborers.

"The exploitation of graduate students in American universities is the mental equivalent of the old sweatshops. . . . [The] average graduate student is 34 years old before he or she breaks free of the cocoon of dependency that is the Ph.D. process."

Meanwhile, "they marry, they have children, they grow old—and yet they are still students. . . . It shouldn't be this way," he declares, and I agree with him. "The things that would fix it are simple: First, we have to stop this business of students teaching students. . . . Second, we have to stop this business of professors using students to conduct their research. . . . Third, we should do everything we can to shorten the time needed to get the degree and to free up the student's time."

That's it. End of analysis. True, there are a few more items on Anderson's list ("universities should expand their loan programs"), but all they do is restate the problem, prefacing it with an urgent imperative ("we have to") without ever giving us a hint as to how that imperative might be accomplished. An act of will is all that Anderson has to recommend.

Anderson is by no means unaware of the larger changes that have produced our current situation. But rather than regarding this transformation as a ground-level fact that establishes the parameters of any proposal for reform, Anderson sees it as a wrong turn taken by history. Like many of his fellow neocons, his chief stock in trade is nostalgia. The image of a small, quiet, rarified institution where he was one of the select few being taught—he pays rhapsodic tribute to his days at Dartmouth in the fifties—is so much before his eyes that the only thing he sees about anything else is how far it falls short of what he remembers.

This is true not only of the material conditions of the educational experience, but of its intellectual content. Not only does Anderson believe that "things" were better when times were simpler and colleges smaller; he believes that ideas were better when there were not so many of them bombarding us with their novelty. "It is difficult," he says, "to improve on Aristotle, Shakespeare, or Adam Smith. . . . It is fair to say that 80 or 90 percent of the economics you need to know to make decent economic policy in the 20th century was figured out and written down in the 18th and 19th centuries." This is the rallying cry—back to the future—of every professional who finds that the assumptions and methods that presided over his education are being challenged by another generation. Rather

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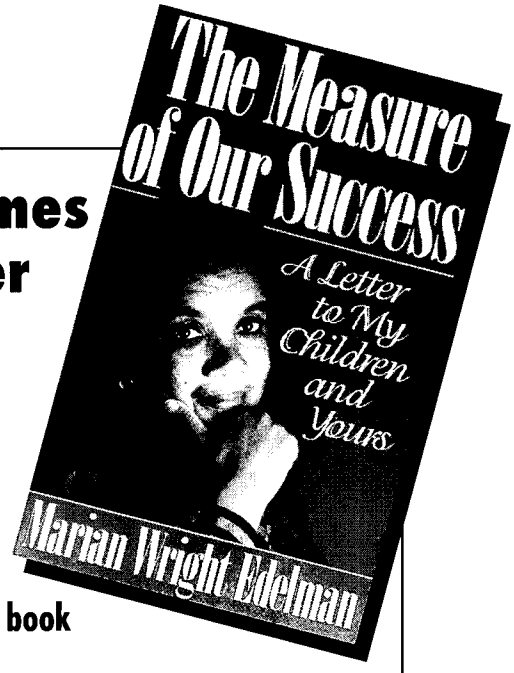

"Every parent and every child should read this book to each other."
T. Berry Brazelton, M.D.

BEACON

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than seeing change and the inevitable dislodgement of older orthodoxies by newer ones—also fated to fade—the academic Jeremiah sees decline and the end of civilization.

—*Stanley Fish*

Chinatown: A Portrait of a Closed Society. Gwen Kinkead. *HarperCollins, $23.* To a publisher hungry for that quintessential New York story, a proposal about Chinatown must seem like a fat pitch. The themes practically leap from the morning headlines. Crime? Chinatown's got gangsters, hit men, and heroin traffickers. Social problems? Its sweatshops rival the 19th-century's. Struggling immigrants making good? Where else will you find peddlers who have saved up to $50,000 hawking toy phones and cheap socks only months after escaping the clutches of Communism? It seems like a sure winner.

Of course, things aren't so simple, as *New Yorker* writer Gwen Kinkead discovered. Why have so few white writers probed Chinatown during its 130-year existence, she asks a local journalist. "The reporters get lost," he tells her. "They get into the quicksand and they disappear."

Kinkead already knew this. Her father, a *New Yorker* writer himself, tried to report on Chinatown in the thirties and was thwarted by a wall of silence. Perhaps driven by his failure, she leaps with admirable courage into a much changed Chinatown and manages to emerge with some sharply observed and even revelatory anecdotes. Unfortunately, part of the story gets left in the quicksand.

At its best, the book reads like a travelogue. Kinkead is a gregarious guide who can mix it up with the locals enough (thanks to her translator) to give her readers a glimpse of this forbidden city and its "invisible people." We meet Mr. Lin, a civil engineer in China who was persecuted during the Cultural Revolution and came to America on a tourist visa in 1986. Working for a Korean grocer and living in a crowded, filthy hovel with nine men, he had already saved $70,000 toward a business—but had never visited Central Park—when Kinkead met him. "Rice very cheap," he tells her to explain his remarkable frugality. In perhaps the book's most charming section, Kinkead pays a boisterous visit to an elite group of Chinese chefs who share secrets about preparing satay, whole fish, bear paw, and armadillo while gambling and downing beers like the Romans at Saturnalia.

There are also admirably detailed discussions of Chinatown's family associations and its criminal syndicates, or tongs, which now rank just below La Cosa Nostra on the Justice Department's list of organized crime groups. Though her material on organized crime is drawn from well-publicized court cases, Kinkead manages to breathe new life into it through detailed interviews with law-enforcement officials and informants. However, she fails to shed much light on the most tragic element of the Chinese syndicates: the disaffected youths who are recruited as street soldiers and become exploited pawns of their adult bosses.

As much as I enjoyed the vignettes, the book would have benefited from providing a stronger sense of Chinatown's impact on the larger Chinese-American community and its place in New York immigrant history.

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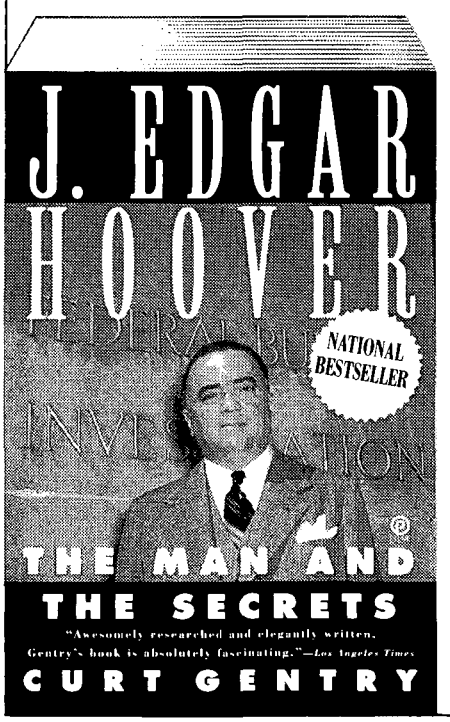

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Seclusion within a protective ghetto is hardly unique to the Chinese, yet Kinkead never clearly makes that point. And her discussion of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act—the only law in U.S. history to have excluded an entire people based on their nationality—that helped to create and shape Chinatowns nationwide is thin. That act, and subsequent laws that existed until World War II, prevented most Chinese from bringing their wives and children to America. Until the fifties, Chinatown was a preponderantly male "bachelor society" whose members toiled arduously to support families in China while dreaming—often in vain—of returning there to die. It was only after the Immigration Act of 1965 that the gender gap closed, families multiplied, and significant numbers of Chinese began moving beyond Chinatown's protective borders.

A deeper problem stems from Kinkead's analysis of Chinatown as a "closed society." "So few whites hang around Chinatown that any who do are assumed to be there on police or government business, and people shut off automatically at the sight of a white person—particularly one asking questions," she writes. Chinese immigrants can be tough interviews. But to suggest that they are put off by the presence of white people is a stretch. This is, after all, a neighborhood that endures thousands of tourists tromping through its streets and gawking in its windows each year—the overwhelming majority of them white.

Every reporter must confront the difficulties of gaining access, so why should she raise the issue here? Because Kinkead's purpose is to define Chinatown as singularly apart and insular. Thus, every diffident shopkeeper and suspicious waiter fits into her larger concept of Chinatown as a claustrophobic, jail-like place from which the immigrants would flee if only they had the chance. Her verbal images help drive home her point: Recent immigrants are "prisoners of Chinatown" who are "isolated" and "feel trapped." A woman equates leaving Chinatown with "an animal escaping a cage." And when they do "escape," they "can't assimilate because they can't speak English."

I don't mean to suggest that this is all wrong. But I do think that Kinkead is missing something: namely, that Chinatown is a far more open and cosmopolitan place than it has ever been. This is no longer the grim enclave of bachelors who dug their heels into lower Manhattan because they were prevented from assimilating. Beyond its restaurants and garment factories, Chinatown has become home to an Asian financial center staffed by an emerging class of lawyers, bankers, and entrepreneurs. These are people who deal daily with the outside world, namely Wall Street and City Hall, and who know something about the American system and how to use it. Though Chinatown remains the economic engine for working-class Chinese, its growing service sector is likely to determine the community's future.

There is a less tangible point to be made here as well. To the rapidly growing community of Chinese immigrants and their children throughout the metropolitan area, Chinatown is more than just a place to eat, shop, find work, or bunk down on the cheap. It is a community where people meet up with friends, nourish their cultural needs, and refuel in a familiar ambience. It is a place that immigrants come to because it welcomes them. That is the double-edged nature of

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immigrant communities: What makes them seem closed to outsiders is also what makes them nurturing to those within.

This book has infuriated many Asian-American writers who see it as one more act of cultural imperialism by a white author who has painted lovely details only to produce a flawed canvas. I don't find this completely fair. Kinkead is a sensitive and observant chronicler, and the book is valuable to anyone who wonders about Chinatown. But it should not, and will not, be the last word on the subject.

—*James Dao*

Ill-Advised: Presidential Health and Public Trust. Robert H. Ferrell. *University of Missouri, $19.95.* This book couldn't be timelier considering the nagging concerns about George Bush's health—see Who's Who—and the revelation that even the righteous Paul Tsongas had an undisclosed recurrence scare after he had said his cancer had disappeared. And the story Ferrell tells is not reassuring. Both presidents and their doctors seem to have a gift for deceiving either themselves—as FDR and Dr. Ross T. McIntyre did—or the public—as John Kennedy and his physicians did. While Wilson, Cleveland, Harding, and Reagan (or their physicians) emerge as deceivers, the shocker of this book is that Eisenhower's medical team, which had heretofore been thought to be honest almost to the point of excess, with its daily reports of the general's bowel movements, was also guilty of concealing important medical information from the public. There's evidence that the president had a heart attack, a stroke, and showed early signs of a serious intestinal disease before a second heart attack, stroke, and a full-blown case of Crohn's disease became widely known.

—*Charles Peters*

Privacy For Sale: How Computerization Has Made Everyone's Private Life an Open Secret. Jeffrey Rothfeder. *Simon & Schuster, $22.* Most of the anecdotes presented in this book have been carefully chosen to scare you witless: You could be the elderly cancer patient who discovers that a malicious Harlem resident has found a way to run up huge bills on your credit cards, or the perfectly healthy man who's denied medical insurance because a faceless, misguided supercomputer thinks you have AIDS. Jeffrey Rothfeder, who first began to investigate the subject of computer data-record surveillance as an editor at *Business Week*, has set out to expose the shadowy world of megadatabases, technospying devices, and international information exchange. Much of what he has to tell is frightening indeed.

The issue of privacy looks as though it's going to be a big one in the next few years, and justifiably so. The thesis of this wide-ranging—if somewhat paranoid—survey is that our country needs new laws to protect its citizens' privacy against the now-overwhelming powers of computers and other technology. Credit bureaus, insurance companies, and government agencies are more capable than ever of keeping and retrieving information about you. Computer records—medical, credit, bank, tax, what have you— have proliferated in scope and accessibility. And if you, sensibly, have a hard time trusting the legitimate institutions that make those records, you should really be worried about the marketing agents and con artists who can access those same private files.

But we should be careful to choose the correct problems to address: Are we worried about privacy for its intrinsic value to us as individuals and members of a society or are we worried simply about the effects invasions of privacy can have upon us? The question is an important one that's not really asked in this book, and many of the privacy issues with which Rothfeder concerns himself have long existed—they've only been exacerbated by machines. This makes solving the problems themselves wiser than trying to legislate them back to the precomputer age.

For instance, Rothfeder makes a big deal out of direct-mail companies that now use database profiles to target different neighborhoods for special deals and offers, like the store in a little town in Georgia that placed ads for

"A real stereotype buster. The anchors of the six o'clock news shows (all channels) must read this quite moving book."—Studs Terkel

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SLIM'S TABLE

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credit and discounts only in the newspapers delivered to the rich end of town. He picks his example shrewdly —we are obviously supposed to equate this kind of direct marketing with racism—but a check-cashing joint in a poor neighborhood does no less to rob from the already disadvantaged. Small, inner-city grocery stores that charge more than suburban supermarkets are no friends to the poor either. And we're going to start worrying *now*? Rothfeder says little to persuade me that this is an especially egregious case. He really loses me when he goes on to complain that these same poor residents will never have the chance to be offered a "preapproved" credit card, as if it were somehow a good idea to give credit to people who could easily use it to ruin their lives with debt they can never pay off. That's what Ronald Reagan did to the American economy, and enough's enough.

Rothfeder discusses the fact that, because medical records are not federally protected, rapacious insurance companies, using computers to access medical files or pharmacy records, can find out about applicants' preexisting medical conditions with much more ease than ever before. Rothfeder wants us to write tough federal laws that will block untoward perusal of medical records. But it doesn't make sense for insurance companies to insure people on whom they know they'll lose money. After all, they're in it for profit, not for our health. Is it right to force them to take bad risks? Perhaps—but health insurance companies, insidious as they are, will find other ways to get at the information. Instead, we should push for health insurance reform—or better yet, national health care—not computer legislation.

Many of Rothfeder's complaints seem so dismally middle class it's hard to take them seriously, like supermarket checkout scanners that record your name and purchases. "[W]ill the joy of shopping without being monitored be taken away also?" one interviewee cries. Consumer databases made from checkout scanner records are up for sale to, as he puts it, "any customer—a catalogue company, a telemarketer, a fringe political group." Eek! L.L. Bean and the American Nazi Party can both find out what kind of foot powder I use! The fact that companies can make a profit selling each other this kind of information leaves me nonplussed—in fact, I kind of like the idea of throwing them into turmoil by buying Mr. Pibb instead of Pepsi.

Direct marketers *can* come up with some pretty venal uses for that information, and that's where this book comes in handy—after reading it, you'll know to look out for phone calls or letters from people who seem to know things about you that only a reputable firm or your bank might know. Just because Oral Roberts sends you a sympathetic note about the hard time you're having paying off your credit card bills doesn't mean he's been discussing your troubles with God.

In the final chapter, Rothfeder offers a short but thoughtful list of actions you can take to keep technology at bay. He strongly suggests obtaining a copy of your credit report often and checking for errors and anomalies. Keep in mind that if you find a company that has done something improper with your name or other information, you can always take your business elsewhere.

Limiting the personal information that the FBI can get its hands on is also a good thing—uh-oh, I'll bet I just rated an entry—and it's easy to imagine government databases getting way out of control. Taking your business to another government isn't, after all, an option. Rothfeder's worries on this front seem entirely justified, as the feds have resources, powers, and channels of information that are not open to private groups. No telemarketers in business today carry guns and badges, and you don't file your tax returns with them.

Yet what's missing in this book is a sense of balance. Yes, computers have been eroding much of the privacy we used to take for granted. But they have their benefits, too, and at any rate, they're here. What would it cost to enact and enforce the kinds of laws Rothfeder demands? Did anyone really believe that the convenience of today's credit cards and universal

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ATM machines would come at no price? And all that information can have its positive uses: In one of the stories Rothfeder recounts, an abusive, alimony-skipping, drug-addicted satan worshipper is tracked down and brought to justice by a private detective armed with only a PC and a modem. Technology, apparently, is not all bad.

—Elliott Beard

The Tragedy of American Compassion. Marvin Olasky. *Regnery Gateway, $21.95.* Politicians invoke it. Urban dwellers suffer fatigue from it. Fundraising letters appeal to our sense of it. The eighties are scorned for lacking it. The term "compassion"— like "democracy" and "fat-free"—is gradually losing its meaning through overuse. Seeking to recover that meaning, Marvin Olasky, a professor of journalism at the University of Texas, traces our changing understanding of the concept from colonial days. "The word 'compassion,' which once had the power to compel action, is now merely a rhetorical device trotted out regularly by Republicans as well as Democrats," Olasky writes in his introduction. By recapturing the vision of an earlier era, when our concept of compassion "was not so corrupt," he believes, "many lives can be saved." It's an innovative idea, and Olasky's swipe at both political parties promises a clear-eyed, even-handed approach.

From the start, though, the warning flags of partisanship abound. In his acknowledgements, Olasky cites the Heritage Foundation (for providing financial support and a "stimulating research and writing environment"), Milton Friedman, and God, "who had compassion on me almost two decades ago and pushed me from darkness into light." The preface is by conservative scholar Charles Murray, who made a name for himself by attacking welfare mothers.

In the opening chapter, which discusses colonial attitudes toward charity, Olasky writes most approvingly of those with the most skinflinty of views. In 1698, we learn, Cotton Mather warned his congregation, "Instead of exhorting you to augment your charity, I will rather utter an exhortation . . . *that you may not*

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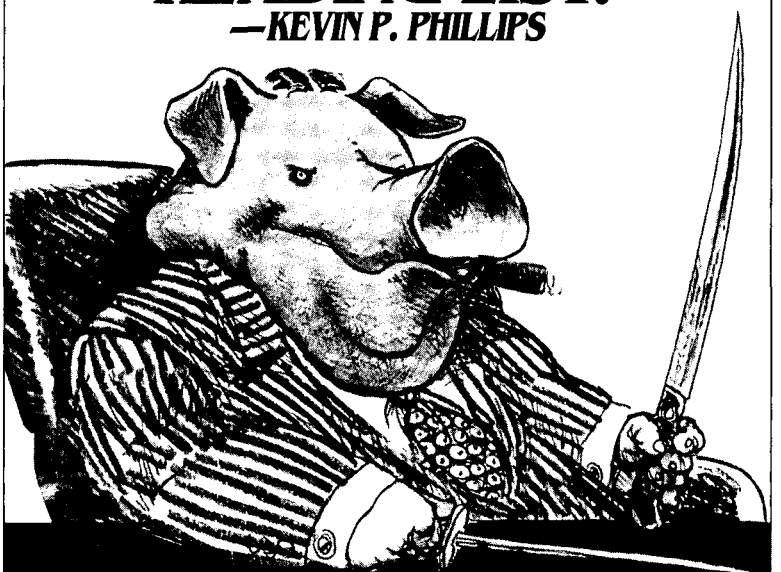
—KEVIN P. PHILLIPS



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abuse your charity by misapplying it." In the 18th century, volunteers distributing aid to the poor diligently checked the character and circumstances of each applicant to make sure that "alcoholism was not contributing to the general misery."

By the 19th century, however, relief groups tried to do "too much too fast" and did not "sufficiently discriminate between the needy and the lazy." Olasky points to one study showing that during the recession of 1873, more than half the money spent on soup kitchens in New York supported "feckless bums" and "imposters."

By the time it enters the 20th century, *The Tragedy of American Compassion* has become a neoconservative morality tale, full of liberal activists working to hijack the concept of compassion and twist it to their own ideological ends. Rather than distinguish between the deserving and undeserving poor, as did an earlier generation of relief workers, modern-day liberals promoted the idea that public assistance is a "right" to which *all* needy people should feel entitled, whatever the cause of their destitution.

Predictably, Olasky traces the change to the Great Society years, when "it became better to accept welfare than to take in laundry." It was a period, Olasky writes, when young men came to feel that "shining shoes was demeaning" and that accepting government subsidy was a way to keep one's "dignity."

Such conclusions only highlight the shallowness of Olasky's analysis. Noting, for example, that the nation's welfare caseload more than doubled between 1965 and 1974, Olasky refers to "studies" showing that "the size of the pool of eligible people did not change much during those years. The major change was that a much higher percentage of those who were eligible suddenly decided to take advantage of welfare benefits." This is a critical point, underlying Olasky's contention that it was a change in values, not socioeconomic conditions, that fueled the rise in welfarism in the sixties. Anyone curious about these "studies," though, will come away frustrated; Olasky cites them in neither the text nor the footnotes. Similarly, he refers to "officials" who "observed that a prime reason for the surge [in welfare cases] was a 'changing outlook among many poor and the near poor.' They had been taught by organizers that welfare is 'nothing to be ashamed of.'" The source of this quote is a single 1970 article in the Newark *Star Ledger*—a slender reed indeed on which to support so sweeping an analysis.

Surveying the current scene, Olasky finds fault with the soup kitchens and shelters set up to help today's poor. In the book's most memorable passage, the author, seeking a "first-hand look at contemporary compassion toward the poor," decides to join the ranks of the homeless. He dons two dirty sweaters, removes his wedding ring, puts dirt on his hands, and walks "with the slow shuffle that characterizes the 40-year-old white homeless male." During his two days on the street, Olasky receives plenty of food and clothing. He comes away dissatisfied, however. Describing a breakfast at a Congregational church, he writes,

> a sweet young volunteer kept putting food down in front of me and asking if I wanted more. Finally I asked, mumbling a bit, "Could I have a Bible?" Puzzled, she tried to figure out what I had said: "Do you want a bagel? A bag?" When I responded, "A Bible," she said, politely but firmly, "I'm sorry, we don't have any Bibles."

For Olasky, the sweet young volunteer embodies the false sense of compassion permeating modern America. By offering food indiscriminately to the worthy and unworthy homeless, she was only aggravating the problem. In Olasky's view, the reprobates, like alcoholics and drug addicts, should be made to take spiritual nourishment before being offered the physical kind.

Needless to say, the current welfare system has many flaws, among them the way it discourages two-parent families. And besides, the idea of differentiating between worthy and unworthy poor is an undeniably appealing one. In today's America, though, the distinction is completely meaningless. The inner-city resident who is beaten as a child and left unattended as a teenager; who drops out of school and joins a gang; who has no skills and hence can find no work; who lives in a garbage-strewn, rat-infested, violence-swept neighborhood; who, in his despair, turns to crack or cheap red wine and becomes dependent on these substances, until in the end he loses all his worldly goods and ends up sleeping in shelters—is this person worthy or unworthy of assistance? Olasky would place him squarely in the latter category and, consequently, deny him food and shelter—everything, in fact, but a Bible.

In its own way, *The Tragedy of American Compassion* is an illuminating book. The spectacle of its author sitting in his air-conditioned aerie at the Heritage Foundation while condemning soup kitchens for handing out too much food shows just how corrupt our notion of compassion has become.

—*Michael Massing*

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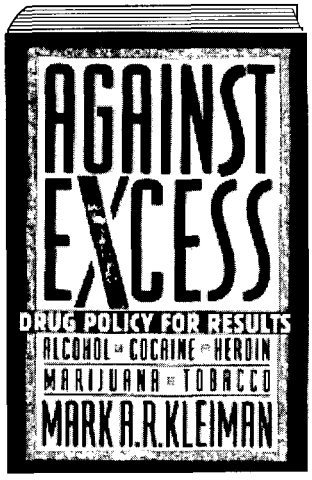

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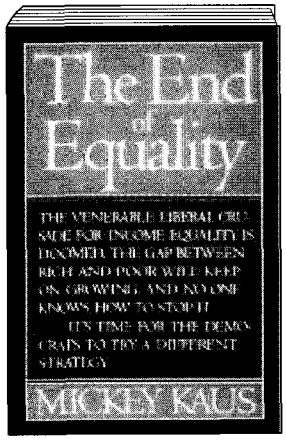

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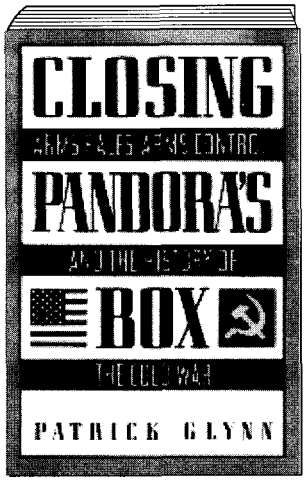

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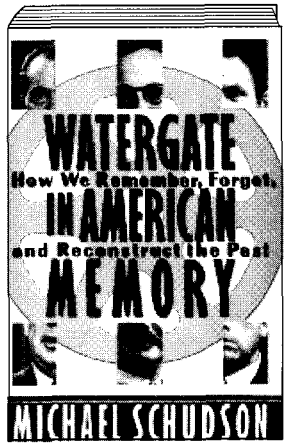

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